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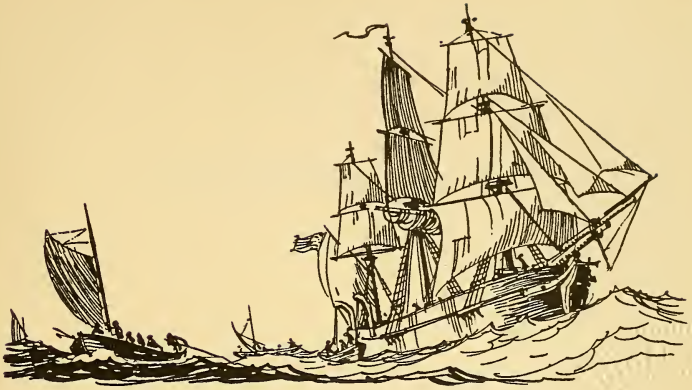

# The Whale Hunters

Written and Illustrated
by

Geoffrey Whittam

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LABORATORY
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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER

# *Preface*

I CANNOT REMEMBER when the idea for this book first started. Perhaps the seed was sown when, as a boy, I listened to the salty tales of my now long-departed seafaring uncles, or browsed in wonder over their old prints of sailors, ships and seaports in far-off lands, or in my daydreams saw the bone ship model in the glass case on my grandfather's bureau come to life and fly with full-bosomed sail over a rolling blue ocean.

It was years later, when I was a student at an art school, that the seed of the idea germinated. It first peeped through the sparse soil of my imagination in the form of a classroom exercise when each of us was asked to produce a specimen picture book on a subject of our own choice. I chose whaling, a subject which had always seemed to me the most fascinating of sea-lore; and it was then that I realised that, colourful though they might be, my boyish mental pictures were very blurred in their outlines and would have to be clarified and sharpened with the aid of research.

From then on, the book, like Topsy, just growed. The captions to the pictures developed into tales and the whalemen, the whaleships and even the whales began to take on character. The pictures themselves began to flow in black ink and crystallise on white paper.

Eventually the book resolved itself into three parts, each set in a different period during the past three-hundred-odd years. It tells of some of the adventures of widely separated generations of a family of whalemen. It tells too something of an even greater adventure story—the story of whaling.

The massive whale factory ship of modern times, fed with whales by her fleet of fast catchers equipped with lethal harpoon guns, is a far cry from those early times

when men went forth in frail craft to kill the Leviathans by hand with spears and harpoons.

I cannot pretend to tell the *whole* story that links modern whaling with its humble but adventurous beginnings; but if I have succeeded in helping the reader to visualise it in broad outline as well as entertaining him at the same time, then I shall know that the writing and illustrating of this book has been worthwhile.

GEOFFREY WHITTAM

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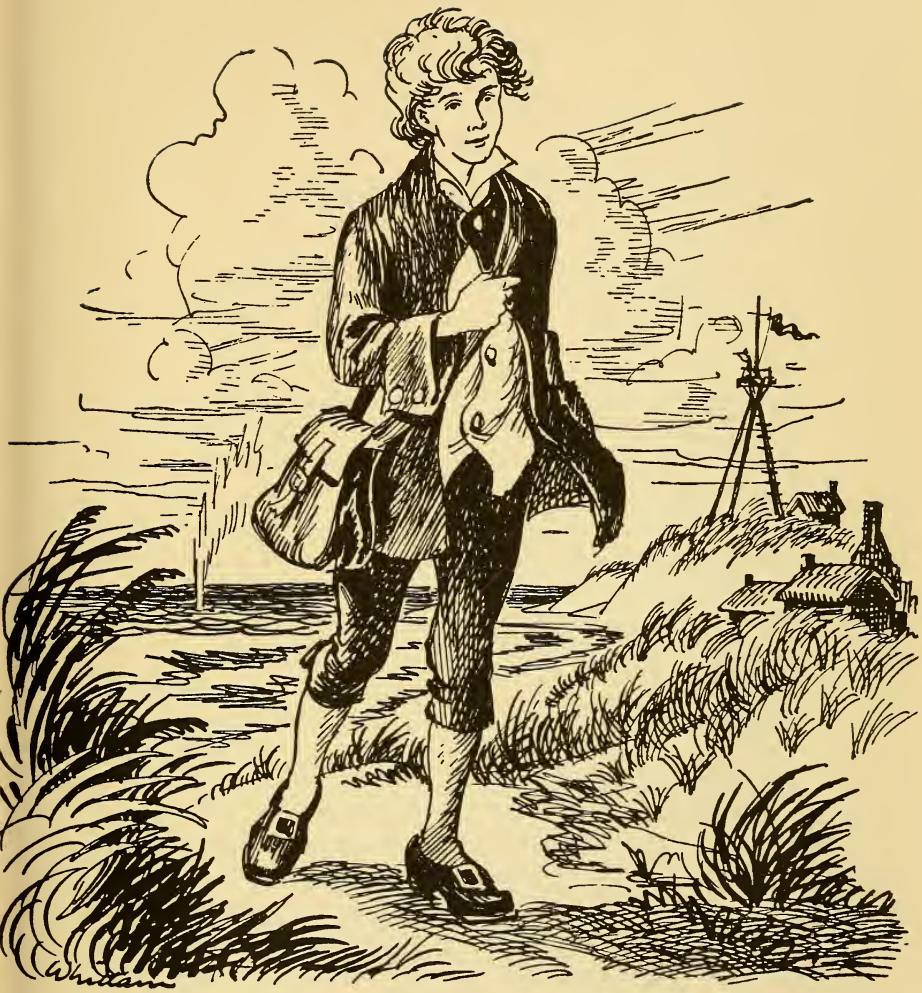


# *Part One: Jonathan*

CHAPTER ONE

# *Arrival at Nantucket*

IN THE LATE afternoon of an early spring day in the year 1731 a trading sloop of some thirty tons entered the harbour of Nantucket in Nantucket Island, New England. Somewhere to the eastward of Cape Cod a few hours before, she had emerged from a bank of fog and had found a ship's boat, full of starved and half-frozen survivors from the wreck of the English brig *Jane Seymour*. The brig, which had sailed from Bideford, Devon, with a cargo of immigrants, had been bound full of hope for Plymouth, New England. Now she lay along with two thirds of her passengers and crew fathoms deep under the grey Atlantic.

Among the wretched little crowd huddled together on the deck of the sloop was a boy of twelve years. He clutched a blanket to his thin, shivering body and his fair hair hung in salt-matted strands.

As the sloop approached the harbour bar he rose to his feet and moved unsteadily to the lee bulwarks, where he stood bracing himself with one hand on the rigging. He was tall for his years, and even his present bedraggled state could not hide that he was a lad of good breeding.

His sad blue eyes surveyed the long flat shoreline of the island, and the scene did nothing to revive his numbed spirit. The endless beaches of sand were backed by low,

undulating land that could boast of nothing approaching a hill like those of his native Somerset, and the stunted, weather-bent trees seemed to cling tenaciously to the soil, where they grew in the few wooded areas. Tall tripods of spars stood along the shore at wide but regular intervals. These and the masts of the vessels in the harbour were the only relief to the low, horizontal lines of the scene. Other details revealed themselves as the sloop crossed the bar. At the head of the lagoon-like harbour a wooden wharf on spindly piles reached out over the shallow water and, clustered behind it, was a collection of odd-looking wooden buildings with thatched roofs, which were the humble dwellings of the inhabitants. On either side of the wharf were rough slipways with small, squat vessels propped on shore-legs, and several other vessels of this type lay at the moorings in the harbour.

'Down jib!' cried the captain. Then, 'Down mains'l!' as the sloop came up into the wind, and in a few moments she was secure alongside the wharf.

The island folk, many of whom were of pure Indian stock, flocked around the gangplank curious to see what cargo the trading packet had brought them. Above the hubbub of many voices the boy could hear that of the first mate addressing the bewildered little group of survivors.

'The ship will be away on this same tide,' he was shouting, 'and I advise those among you who wish to sail with us to the mainland ports to be on this vessel's deck within two hours from now. Those of you who are absent I shall deem to have discovered some hospitality here and to be content to stay.'

Only those who were standing very near him heard him add in lower tones, 'There are better places than this to seek your fortune, but please yourselves.'

The boy looked again at the flat landscape and was inclined at first to agree with the mate.

The island of Nantucket, which at this period in history

*The island folk flocked around the gangplank*

was known as Sherburne, is really a huge sandbank reaching out like a beckoning arm from the east coast of the North American continent. Its area is about fifty square miles. Among the low, sandy hillocks of its central parts are pools and marshes of both fresh and salt water and, as in the Romney marshes of England, you feel that the sea is always with you. The salt winds sweep across the flat pastures of beach grass, the cry of seabirds and the distant roar of the surf are always in your ear and you know that this island belongs in its nature, not to the great continent to the westward, but to the Atlantic Ocean; and you wonder as you look upon the frailty of its structure how, in the course of its precarious existence, it has withstood the fury of the mighty ocean that embraces it. You wonder, too, how the Nantucketers have wrought a livelihood from such a barren island until you learn that it is the sea itself which has been the green pastures of Nantucket.

Long before the first white settlers arrived Indians lived there and caught mackerel and cod from their frail bark canoes. When whales came close to the shore they went forth in full force and by means of long drawn harassing tactics they wore these Leviathans down until they were able to kill them with spears. They ate the flesh and boiled the oil from the blubber. The sea provided them with the greater part of their livelihood but the land was also a source of food, for at that time the island was wooded and the soil fertile. Then the white men came. They needed timber for houses, for boats and fuel, and in the areas where trees were felled the soil was no longer fertilised by their fallen leaves nor protected by them from the fierce sea winds, so that its productivity waned and the Nantucketers, white and red alike, became more and more dependent upon the harvests from the sea. The settlers built boats that were much more seaworthy than the Indian canoes and made an industry

out of the catching of fish. Then they found a whale in one of the harbours and kept it imprisoned there until their blacksmith had fashioned a crude harpoon. Prompted by the Indians they harassed and killed it, and sold the oil which they extracted from its overcoat of blubber. Other whales were killed and the oil extracted. With all their Quaker instincts for grasping new opportunities they were quick to realise that here was a commodity that could win them their daily bread. True, neighbouring islands such as Martha's Vineyard and Long Island and places such as Cape Cod and New Bedford were a step ahead now and then; but whaling was to be their staple industry, of that they were sure, and they pursued it with all the vigour of their pioneering natures.

At first they were content to catch whales from boats launched from their island beaches. Then, as the world demand for whale oil increased and they found that the seas beyond their shores appeared to possess a limitless stock of whales, they built small sloops and took them into the deeper waters of the Atlantic. These sloops were only of thirty or forty tons burden at first and they carried only two whale boats, one of which was a spare.

Such was the island upon which the boy gazed as he wondered whether to entrust himself to its hospitality, if indeed there was any to be found there. Perhaps the mate was right, perhaps the mainland would offer some place better than this. Yet somehow the very bleakness of the scene seemed in harmony with his present mood.

'I will see what it is like,' he told himself and descended the gangplank.

CHAPTER TWO

# *The Innkeeper and His Wife*

THE BOY WALKED along the wharf to where a rough track led to the waterfront. He noticed that the walls of the houses were mostly constructed of logs and that in practically every case there was at the summit of the thatched roof a sort of balcony, the reason for which he was to discover later.

Coming to a house bearing a small sign on which was a picture of a spouting whale and the inscription, *Black Whale Inne*, he stopped and looked around towards the wharf. He seemed to be the only one of the survivors

who had ventured this far from the ship and this appeared to be the only inn along the single row of buildings. He wondered how he would be received if he entered and asked for shelter.

As he stood there shivering and trying to choose between pushing open the door or retracing his steps and rejoining the ship, a man's head appeared at one of the open windows above the inn sign.

'Bless me, but look what the sea has washed up!' the man exclaimed and turning his head inwards towards the room he called, 'Come and see, Mrs. Mather,' whereupon two pairs of curious eyes stared down at the boy.

'Why the poor mite is shivering with the cold,' exclaimed the woman. 'Come in,' she called to the boy, 'come in and we will give you a bowl of hot soup.'

The boy pushed open the door and met the woman hurrying down the stairs, followed by her husband. She was a short round motherly type with a rosy shining face and a great mass of grey hair drawn tightly to the top of her head on which rested a small white lace cap.

'Without doubt, you must be one of those rescued by the packet that has just come in,' she said.

The boy nodded. 'Yes, Ma'am.'

'And what is your name?'

'Jonathan. Jonathan Oakley,' he replied.

'Come to the fire in the parlour,' she said, putting an arm round his slim shoulders and then, feeling the dampness of the blanket that he still wore, she thrust her other hand beneath its folds.

'Bless me, your clothes are still wet,' she cried. 'That good-for-nothing trading master ought to be flogged letting you come ashore in such a state. Off with them at once and I'll rummage out some of our Joseph's for you.'

Jonathan assumed that Joseph must be the son of these kindly people and if the measurements of his clothes are

any guide, thought Jonathan, as he donned homespun breeches and doublet several sizes too large for his boyish frame, he must be quite a big fellow; but he was grateful for the warmth they brought to his body.

As he crouched over the fire warming his hands, Mrs. Mather entered with a bowl of steaming soup which she set on a wooden stool by his side.

'There, Jonathan boy, drink that and you'll feel better,' she said, 'and when you've finished that you might like a slice of baked cod. If you want me you'll find me in the kitchen at the end of the passage. But here is Mr. Mather with a jug of ale.'

As she left the room she added, 'You'll have to grow a bit yet to fill out those clothes of Joseph's.'

Mr. Mather put the jug of ale on the flagstones of the fireplace and seated himself opposite the boy in a large rocking chair. He was a large robust man with a face even more pink than his wife's. A small periwig sat precariously on his bald head.

'Is the soup to your liking?' he asked.

'It is indeed welcome, sir,' replied Jonathan. 'But, but I am unable to pay you, sir,' he stammered. 'I have no money. I had forgotten that I lost everything when the ship went down.'

He put the soup bowl on the table and stood there confused and embarrassed.

'Sit down, my son, and do not trouble your mind with such thoughts,' said the landlord and there was a kindness in his tone that was intended to reassure the boy. 'It is but a small thing, a meal and a board for a shipwrecked mariner.'

'But I am no true mariner,' said Jonathan, 'I am, or was a passenger from England. I was travelling with my father and mother when the——' His gaze wandered to the fire and he swallowed hard to stifle the clutching sensation in his throat. A tear trickled down his cheek

and he wiped it away with the surplus end of Joseph's sleeve.

Blinking his moist eyes he turned again to the landlord. 'If, if I am to accept your hospitality I promise you, sir, that I will seek to repay it at the first opportunity. I shall find work of some kind and shall not always be without a silver piece in my purse.'

The landlord looked into the boy's face and his eyes narrowed so that the crowsfoot wrinkles reached nearly to his large ears. He said, 'I can see that you come from a God-fearing home, my son, and I like your honest ways of thinking. You can stay here as long as you wish and if your conscience worries you you can relieve it by helping Mrs. Mather and me. There are the pigs and the fowls and the cow as well as the running of the inn, unless, of course, you feel like seeking a berth in one of the ships.'

Further discussion of Jonathan's future was interrupted by the entry of Mrs. Mather carrying a plate of baked cod.

'Don't let the boy sit there starving, Mr. Mather,' she scolded. 'See that he fills that empty stomach of his, poor boy.'

After this warning Mr. Mather called out to his wife each time the boy's plate became empty. Another helping of cod was followed by a plate of cold salt pork, then some bread and cheese and finally the jug of ale to wash it all down. For the first time in several days Jonathan was no longer hungry; only very, very tired. Through half-closed eyes he saw Mr. Mather clearing away the dishes and then, lying back in the wooden armchair, he was fast asleep.

When he awoke daylight had gone and the parlour was in candlelight. Opposite him Mr. Mather was seated by the fire smoking a long churchwarden pipe. Jonathan blinked his sleepy eyes and looked towards the darkened window.

'Yes, son, she has sailed,' said Mr. Mather, reading his thoughts.

Somehow Jonathan was not sorry; he had had his fill of sea voyaging for the time being. Refreshed by his sleep, short though it had been, and no longer burdened by indecision, he felt in much better spirits.

'Mr. Mather,' he said, rather solemnly, 'I would like to accept your offer of employment, if it is still open. I am quite ignorant of the business of innkeeping but I promise you I will try to learn it and be of service to you.'

The man smiled at the boy's serious face and formality of manner.

'I shall be pleased to have you help me, my son,' said Mr. Mather, 'but to-night you are my guest, so be at your ease. To-night you'll sleep in a warm bed and to-morrow will be time enough to talk of toil.'

The next day Mrs. Mather insisted that Jonathan did no work because in her own words 'his poor skinny body needed nourishing first.' So he spent the day exploring the inn and the small farm that the Mathers ran. At suppertime he sat at the table in the parlour with two sailors. One of them was a ruffianly looking man with a great mass of whiskers. All three ate their meal in silence but when it was finished the boy's tongue was the first to loosen.

'What sort of ships do you sail in, sir?' he asked of the sailor with the black whiskers.

'Whalers mostly,' replied the man.

'And what do the people of this island do?'

The man looked surprised. 'What do they do, he asks. What do they do? Why, in a place such as Sherburne there ain't nothing else a man can do but catch fish and sell it if he can. There's a bit of Indian trading to be had but that ain't much.'

'Are there plenty of fish on these shores?' asked Jonathan.

'Plenty, and big ones too; biggest there is in the sea,' replied the man.

The other sailor, a young fellow in his twenties, spoke for the first time.

'If you speak of whales—and I believe you do—would it not be better to acquaint the boy with the differences between them and the ordinary fishes like cod and mackerel?' he said with civility.

''Old your tongue, young whippersnapper,' growled Blackwhiskers. 'I was 'untin' whales on these shores before you were born and I tell you sure as the Devil, the whale's a fish like all others and there ain't another man in Sherburne 'ld say different.'

'And that, Nathan Sykes, is where you are as far adrift as a pig in mid-Atlantic,' boomed the voice of Mr. Mather as he entered the parlour. 'I would for one. Take no heed of his talk, lads, except when he says that there are many as ignorant of God's works as himself.'

Nathaniel Sykes rose to his feet and his face, where it was not covered by his whiskers, went red with anger. He tried to speak but words failed him and he stalked to the door and disappeared into the passage muttering.

Mr. Mather turned to the young sailor. 'Be cautious of that man, sailor. He makes a bad enemy to those that cross him.'

'He seems to have much influence with the Indians,' said the sailor.

'Yes,' replied Mr. Mather, 'but only by reason of the fire-water that he takes to their villages. The red man is strong enough in the bow of a boat with a harping iron in his hand, but give him a sniff of Nathan's nectar and he's no more will than a babe in arms.' He lifted his wig and scratched his bald pate. 'And there is precious little that Godfearing folk can do to stop it.'

The sailor rose to take his leave. 'It is good,' he said, 'to meet an older man who shares my beliefs about the

nature of the whale. My ship sails on the tide but when she returns I hope we shall be able to discuss the matter more fully.'

'Good hunting, sailor,' said Mr. Mather as the young man went on his way.

'That's what I like about keeping an inn,' he said turning to Jonathan, 'you meet all types of men, good and bad.'

'But how is it, sir?' asked Jonathan, 'that you, an innkeeper and farmer, know about these strange creatures of the sea?'

'On this island, Jonathan, whales are as much part of our livelihood as innkeeping, tilling the poor soil or raising hogs, sheep and cattle. I am too old to chase whales now but I still watch them being brought to the shores and stripped of their blubber. In my youth before I came to the new country I sailed with the big English whalers to Spitzbergen and Jan Mayen.'

'And what is it that distinguishes whales from other fishes?' asked Jonathan.

Mr. Mather reached for one of the churchwarden pipes over the fireplace and tucked the bowl in his doublet whilst he carved some flakes from a plug of dark tobacco. He was not sure, as we are to-day, that whales are mammals but he had observed many things about them that seemed in strange discord with their fish-like shape.

'There are several differences, my son,' he said, puffing up clouds of smoke. 'I think the first thing you would notice would be the tail. A whale's is flat like the top of the sea but the tail of an ordinary fish is up and down like the rudder of a ship. A whale breathes the atmosphere through a hole in the top of his head and must refresh his lungs by coming to the surface frequently but an ordinary fish has no lungs and seems to be quite content to pass water through its gills. In short you'll never find a whale with gills. There's another thing too; a whale bears its

babes the same as do any of the sows in my yard, save that it only has one or two at a time; and the mother suckles its young as they float together just below the surface; other fishes, with the one exception of sharks which also bear their young, spawn their eggs all over the sea and take no interest in the fate of their offspring. And when you feel the flesh of a fresh killed whale it is warm like that of an ox, but other fish are cold through and through when you take them from the sea. It is the whale's blubber that keeps out the cold of the sea and it covers him all over like a thick blanket. It is the reason why men kill the whale for from it comes the oil which is so precious.'

Mr. Mather puffed at his pipe in silence for a while. Then he said, 'There are many different kinds of whales you know, son. Those within my experience I have always been able to separate into two families; the first with teeth which includes the big spermaceti and smaller ones like the killer, the bottlenose, the white whale and the narwhal and all the small dolphins; and the second without teeth but having curtains of bone which we call fins hanging from their upper jaws; of this family there is the black right whale which you may see off our own shores, and there is the Greenland right whale that the Dutch and the English seek in the northern seas; there is the humpback that loves to frolic close to the shore and many others of this family. But the biggest of all whales is still stranger to me for he was always too fast for any boat that I was in, though I've heard tales of him being found stranded and measuring over a hundred feet in length. The oceans are wide and there are many I have not sailed and only the Lord knows what wonders are to be found there.'

'In truth, Mr. Mather,' said Jonathan, 'this business of whaling is a big subject and you make me wish I knew more of it. Until now my knowledge of whales had

There are many species of the Cetacea order of mammals known as Whales. These are the ones mentioned in this book. They include all the important ones hunted for commercial purposes, both past and present & are divided into two sub-orders.

## BALEEN or WHALEBONE WHALES

Right Whales that Jonathon saw hunted

Black right whale of the Atlantic

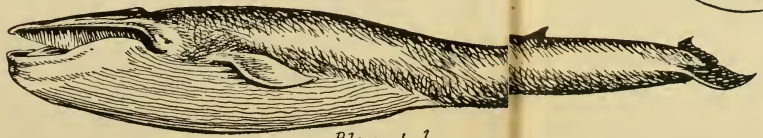
Greenland right whale or 'bowhead' of the Arctic

Humpback whale which everybody hunted

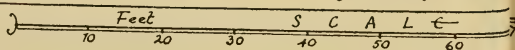
Rorquals that Carl hunted in the Antarctic

Sei whale

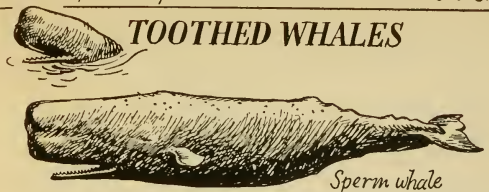
Fin whale



Blue whale




## TOOTHED WHALES



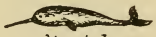
Sperm whale that Thomas hunted in the Pacific and Carl in the Southern Ocean

Killer whale (male)

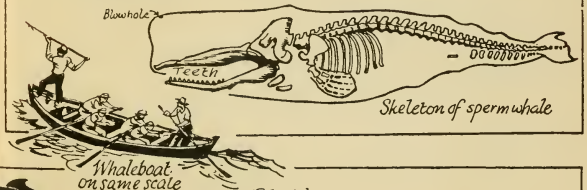
Bottle-nosed whale

Dolphins and porpoises

White whale

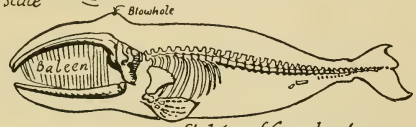


Narwhal

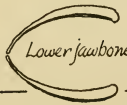



Skeleton of sperm whale

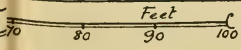
Whaleboat on same scale




Skeleton of Greenland right whale



Lower jawbones of Greenland right whale




Geoffrey Whittam

not reached beyond the story in the Holy Bible. What kind of whale would you say it was that swallowed Jonah?'

'Might have been a spermaceti, son. He feeds on big cuttlefish and has a bigger gullet than any other. It could not have been a killer because, though he might make a meal off any man that might be so foolish as to offer himself, he is too small in the gullet. And it most certainly was not one of the whales with fins in their mouths for they feed only on very small creatures like shrimps. It is a terrible thing to see one of them coming towards you with his cavernous jaws wide agape, scooping up his victuals off the sea's surface, and though you'd think at the time that he could swallow you *and* your boat at one gulp his gullet is made very small. All these whalebone whales can take into their mouths tons of water at a time and the whalebone curtains hanging from their jaws act like big shrimp nets. The water is forced out at the sides of their mouths and the small creatures are left inside for them to swallow. That is why their gullets are so small.'

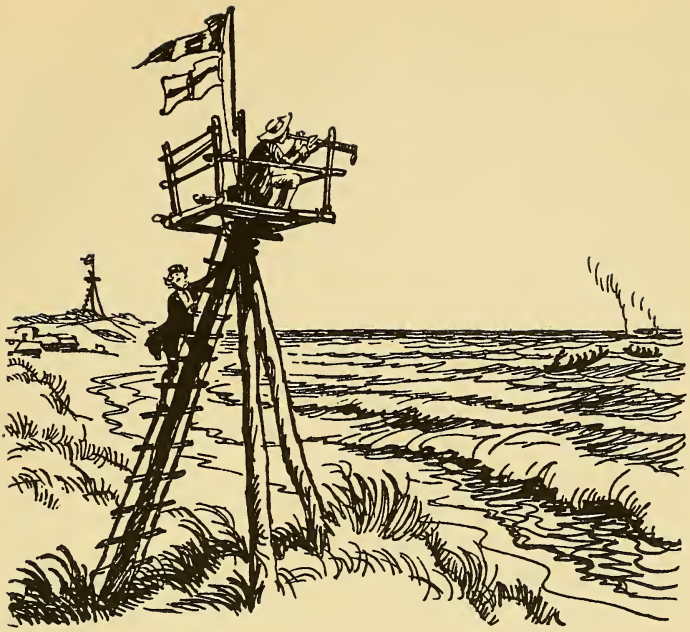
Mr. Mather's pipe had gone out and he lit it with a spill from the fire.

'If it was not a spermaceti that swallowed Jonah,' he said, 'then it must have been some whale of which I am ignorant.'

Jonathan was trying hard to digest all this information. He had not expected Mr. Mather to give his simple question such deep consideration.

'I think,' he said, 'that I shall have to see all these things for myself before I can fully understand them.'

'You'll see much,' said the innkeeper, 'just by taking a walk around the shores of this island. But now it is time you were in bed.'



CHAPTER THREE

# *The Whales Along the Shore*

SO JONATHAN worked at the inn and learned his various tasks with a rapidity that both amazed and pleased Mr. Mather and his good wife. They were more than ever amazed to find that Jonathan could read and write, a thing so rare among the boys in the colonies. His father had been a notary and had educated his only son as well as his means had permitted. It had been in the capacity of

a lesser envoy of George II that Mr. Oakley had left England for the colony of New England. He had not been a wealthy man but what little he had possessed had gone down with the ill-fated *Jane Seymour*, for the Oakleys had anticipated a long stay in New England, his appointment having been of a permanent nature, and they had taken with them all their worldly belongings. Jonathan's sole inheritance from his father was the education he had received; but that, in a lad of mettle, is more than the value of silver and gold, as Jonathan found when later he grew to manhood.

In addition to feeding the livestock and helping in the inn he was able to relieve Mr. Mather of the task of keeping the accounts and was kept so occupied with one thing and another that he had little time to grieve about the past or to worry about the future. As the weeks passed he quickly regained the weight he had lost and Mrs. Mather was as proud of him as if he had been her own son. Joseph, her youngest son, she told him, was away on the other side of the island hunting the whale, and the three older boys were in whaleships somewhere in the Atlantic.

One fine spring morning as the sun peeped through the sea mist Jonathan slung a satchel of food over his shoulder and waving farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Mather at the door of the inn he set out across the island for the south-east coast to find the whaling camp where he knew that Joseph Mather was employed and to see for himself the way in which whales were hunted from the shore. Stepping out at good speed he followed the low ridges of sparse pasture that encircled the marshes and after a few hours came in sight of the tall lookout spars that stretched at intervals of several miles along the coast ahead of him.

It was still not yet noon when he sighted the cluster of huts and trying-out ovens. He quickened his pace to

shorten the distance but he was still a quarter of a mile away when he stopped suddenly and listened.

From the man on the lookout spar came an oft repeated call.

'Town ho! Town ho! They blow, they blow!'

It was the call that was to echo again and again through the coming years of Jonathan's life, the whaleman's call to action that in other versions Ottar the voyager had heard in King Alfred's time, that the Basques had heard along the Biscay shores in the twelfth century and the Dutch, German and English whalemen had heard in the bays of Spitzbergen for several hundred years.

It was the cry that the islanders used on first sighting the whale to call out the whalemen from their towns, villages and camps and which in later decades of American deep-sea whalers was to change to the well-known cry of 'There She Blows!'

Jonathan's gaze followed the direction of the lookout's pointing arm. From his position on the summit of the dune he had a clear view of the sea but for a moment he saw nothing but the white specks of a flock of seabirds wheeling over the Atlantic rollers. Then his sharp eyes caught sight of a crystal white fountain that lingered over the sea and then dissolved itself into the sunlit atmosphere; again within several seconds the white fountain shot upwards. It came from the head of a whale which now emerged from the water to reveal its black shining back. He saw more spouts of white vapour as other whales came to the surface to replenish their lungs with fresh air and he knew from the things that Mr. Mather had told him that this was a pod of black right whales.

In response to the cry of the lookout the camp came suddenly to life. White men and Indians came hurrying from the huts carrying lances, harpoons and other equipment which they tossed into the four slender, canoe-like boats that lay on the beach. Each boat was launched

through the surf by six men. Jonathan thrilled at the manner in which their bows lifted to the crashing seas as the oarsmen fought to make the blades of their oars bite the white water. With men baling out the water that had washed into them the boats reached the smoother water clear of the surf and then with their sails filling to the south breeze they steered towards the spouting whales.

Jonathan ran to the foot of the lookout spar which stood on a high dune overlooking the camp.

'You will see the sport more easily from up here,' called the lookout from his tiny platform, as he hoisted a signal flag on a short mast. 'Come up here and we'll watch the fun together.'

Jonathan climbed up and seated himself next to a skinny youth in his teens who wore a broad straw hat to shade his eyes from the sun.

'You are not by chance one called Joseph Mather?' asked Jonathan.

'No, stranger, I am Ebenezer Small. Joseph is in one of the boats out there where I would be if they had not sent me up this spar. That is Joseph's boat coming up to the whale now with our Master Jackson at the steering oar. And that is Chimoo pulling the bow oar. He's the finest harpinger in all New England.'

He put a large telescope to his eye. 'Stand up! Stand up, you red devil. Not too near those flukes or they'll stove your boat, Master Jackson,' he howled in anguished tones. 'Stand up, stand up, Chimoo, or she'll sound before you can strike.'

He gasped with impatience. 'Here, you take a spy through this glass, lad, for I cannot bear to watch longer.'

Jonathan looked through the long telescope and as if in response to Ebenezer's imploring words the tall figure with feathered head-dress shipped his oar and stood like a bronze statue with harpoon lifted high. The long brown arm flashed and the harpoon flew through the air, its

line uncoiling from the bows and taking with it a cumbersome wooden drogue that the Indian threw over the side.

'The spyglass, quick,' said Ebenezer and clasped it to his eye. 'See, he sinks another iron and the other boats close in; but there go flukes; the whale sounds and they'll have to wait a while now before they can sink others.'

'More boats are coming from the north,' observed Jonathan.

'You are right, lad. They have seen my signal and are joining the hunt.'

The principle adopted by these shore whalemen was based on the long drawn harassing tactics that the Indians used against whales long before the first white settlers came to the New England shores. The lightly built cedar-planked boats manned by mixed crews of red and white men almost invariably carried an Indian harpooner and were owned and usually commanded by white men. Their method was to launch all available craft into the chase and to sink into the whale as many harpoons as possible during the periods that it was refreshing its lungs on the surface. The sharp harpoons weakened the whale and the drogues that were attached to them retarded his progress when trying to escape, whether along the surface or in a deep dive. As his strength waned more and more harpoons and drogues were fastened to him until, often after many hours, he was despatched by thrusting a long sharp lance into his lungs. Never at any stage in this method of hunting were the boats actually attached to the whale as were the boats of the deep-sea whaleships.

Jonathan and Ebenezer took turns to visit the kitchen of the camp. The cook who was an old Indian with a face set in a thousand wrinkles presented them each with a platter of fish which, together with some of Mrs. Mather's pastries from Jonathan's satchel, was enough to satisfy their midday appetites.

Fourteen boats had by now entered the fray and a second whale was fighting for its life further along the shore, the rest having taken fright and disappeared; but for Jonathan it was Master Jackson's whale which now became the central figure in the drama that was being enacted within the narrow circle of the telescope's vision. And into the circle now came Master Jackson's boat, and the hunter and the prey were two long dark shapes against a patch of water lashed to white foam by the tail of the stricken Leviathan.

The boy saw that the Indian harpooner was now at the steering oar and that Master Jackson had taken Chimoo's place in the bows. Boat and whale fused to a single dark shape and he knew that this was the moment when the white hunter was thrusting his long lance deep into that part of the whale which was known as his 'life.'

Goaded to fury the whale lifted its tail twenty feet into the air and brought it down with such force that the boat was momentarily lost from view in a cloud of spray.

With a gasp of surprise Jonathan saw that the next spout was not white but blood red and he knew that the whale was vanquished. He lowered the telescope from his eye and for a few moments the thrill of the hunt and his admiration for the skill and bravery of the whalemen gave way to a feeling of pity for the doomed creature.

Ebenezer took the telescope from him. 'They have killed him!' he cried. 'He lies fin out. Well done Master Jackson, well done!' and, taking Jonathan by the hands he made the rickety lookout post fairly shake as he bounced with joy.

Pity vanished and jubilation flowed into the boy's breast. Few sights stir the heart of man or boy so deeply as that of his brothers responding victoriously to the challenges of nature.

The low westering sun sent its beams over the sea and touched the sides of the six boats with gold as they

formed a tandem and towed the whale slowly and laboriously to the shore. Thirty-six men pulled as a single crew. The sun went down and the sea wind lost its warmth. Jonathan shivered.

'Let us go down now,' said Ebenezer.

Darkness had covered the sea when the whale was finally brought to the shore and made secure.

In the flickering candlelight of one of the huts where the crews were enjoying a well earned meal Jonathan found Joseph Mather. He was, as Jonathan guessed from the size of the clothes he had borrowed, a tall, well-built fellow and looked about seventeen years old. Under a mop of dark curly hair his bronzed eager face lit with a friendly smile when he learned that Jonathan was the boy who was employed at his father's inn and over the meal of fish and whale steaks there was much for them to talk about, for Joseph had not visited his home for several weeks.

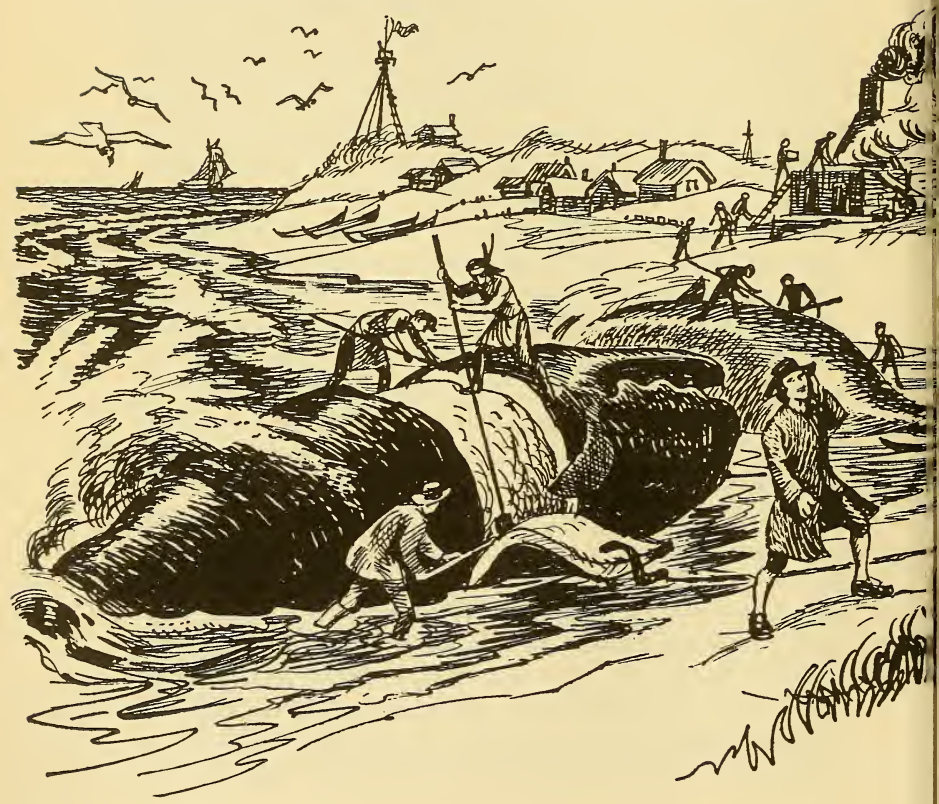
That night Jonathan slept in a rough wooden bunk against the log wall of the hut. The bunk was hard without a mattress and in another bunk over his head the sound of Ebenezer's breathing was like a saw cutting through a whale's backbone. From around the hut came a chorus of other various unmusical sounds and from outside came the deep bass roar of the surf. But none of these affected Jonathan for he slept the sleep of deep oblivion.

After a hurried breakfast in the cold light before dawn Jonathan went to where two black carcasses each nearly sixty feet long lay in the white surf. Already the two rows of baleen (or whale fins as they were then called) had been cut from the twenty-foot long upper jaws of one of them. They lay in bundles on the beach to await cleaning. From this came the strong flexible substance known as whalebone which, although even in those times could command a good price, reached its highest value in the

nineteenth century when it was eagerly sought by the manufacturers of such articles as whips, umbrellas and ladies' corsets.

The huge tongue which was as long as an elephant's body had also been removed and would be boiled down to produce as many as fifteen barrels of whale oil.

The most important task for the whalemen, however, was the removal of the blubber that covered the whale on whose slippery sea-washed surface men were now making deep incisions with specially made cutting spades. They severed off long strips and as turf is cut from the soil so this



foot thick oil-bearing blanket was cut from the whale's flesh. Capstans or 'crabs' mounted on the beach supplied the power.

Jonathan jumped in behind one of the capstan bars and joined the circle of toiling men. He slipped and fell and the long brown legs of an Indian stepped over him. The men laughed but with bleeding lip he leapt back to his task.

'Walk it around, my chummies, walk it around!'

*Jonathon helped with the 'cutting in' of black right whales killed off the Nantucket beaches*

chanted one. 'Put thy hearts into it. Come, come, is that the best that thou canst do? Thou, boy, put thy chest to the bar and show me something of the man thou hopest to be one day.'

As each blanket piece of blubber came up the beach on the end of the capstan rope it was unhooked and loaded into a horse-drawn cart which when full took its loads to the trying-out ovens nearby. There the blubber was chopped into fine pieces before being sent up in baskets to the tops of the ovens where it was dropped into the boiling coppers. The fires had been started with wood but soon the frizzled tissues of the blubber were scooped from the bottoms of the coppers, strained and used as fuel so that the plumes of smoke from the chimneys changed from blue to black and the clean sea air became fouled by the stench of burning flesh.

Then the men standing on the platforms around the coppers ladled the boiling liquid into wooden troughs each of which led to a complicated system of wicker filters and wooden barrels. From this primitive plant whose only power was the simple force of gravity the cooled and purified oil emerged at ground level and flowed into the casks in which it would be stoppered and stored; and in which, in due course, it would be shipped to Boston, Massachusetts, which was the marketing centre for the whale oil of New England.

In the late afternoon when the last cask had been stoppered the great Master Jackson himself came and walked between the rows counting off with his forefinger the total yield from the two whales.

'Three hundred and eighteen barrels!' he cried and a cheer went up from the tired band of whalemen.

As the crowd dispersed Jonathan was joined by Joseph and Ebenezer, who despite their weariness were showing broad grins, evidently in anticipation of their own particular share of the profits.

Jonathan looked towards the late afternoon sun. 'I think I must return to the inn now,' he said, addressing Joseph, 'for I am employed by your father and not by Master Jackson, you know.'

'Do not worry yourself, Jonathan,' said Joseph reassuringly. 'Father knows that whaling is the only thing for a man to do in this island. Keeping an inn is but a hobby for an old man who has had his fill of whaling. You know, of course that he is part owner of several of the sloops?'

'Yes, I have been employed keeping his accounting books and guessed that he had other interests besides the inn,' replied Jonathan.

'And there are some bigger ships being built in the yards that he is interested in,' said Ebenezer.

'That is what this island needs, more ships,' said Joseph. 'Father says whales are not so plentiful along the shore as they were, and if we are to stay in the whale fishery we must have more and more ships. There are plenty of whales waiting to be taken in the Greenland waters, provided the great European whaleships do not kill them all before we arrive there. But the sea mist is rising, Jonathan, and you must be on your way. Take the path yonder that runs by the Indian village. You will find it much easier than the one by which you came yesterday.'

The three lads walked to the huts and after Jonathan had collected his satchel he bade his companions farewell.

As Jonathan strode along the sandy track the mist drifted in from the sea and wrapped the land in a cold damp blanket of grey. As he walked on he found that the track led through one of the few wooded areas of the island. Ahead the yellow sandy track receded into the fog so that he did not at first notice the tall figure of the Indian striding towards him from the opposite direction. Then, as the man came nearer he saw him and stopped; he was

a little afraid for he was still in awe of the natives and had not before encountered them in or near their villages. As he stood summoning his courage to come face to face with the stranger he saw something move among the dimness of the trees and at the same moment there was an explosion. The Indian clutched his side and then fell limply to the ground where he lay quite still.

From the trees the grey shape emerged and became the dark clad figure of a man. Smoke still drifted from the barrel of the pistol in his hand as he gave the body a push with his foot. Then out of the corner of his eye he saw Jonathan standing speechless and motionless on the track.

In the same moment that the boy turned to run he recognised the black-bearded features of Nathaniel Sykes, the ruffianly man he had seen on his second night at the inn.

Fleeing through the wood Jonathan heard the man's footsteps behind him on the dead leaves and then felt a hand grip the tail of his coat. He spun round and the large ugly bearded features glowered down at him.

'Now, young Jonathan,' the man breathed, 'you and me 'ave got to have a bit of a parley and come to an understandin'.'

He waited till he had got his breath, then he went on, 'I don't want it known to no livin' soul what you've seen just 'appen. In fact, as far as you know, it never did 'appen, did it?' and he crushed the boy's shoulder in his large hand. 'Did it?' he repeated and a knife in the other hand touched Jonathan's throat till it pricked the skin and the blood ran on to his collar. The grip on his shoulder tightened like a vice. 'Swear you never saw it 'appen!'

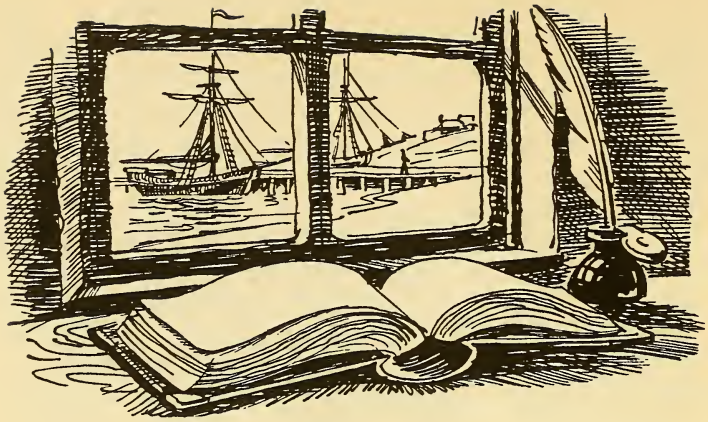
'I swear, I swear!' gasped Jonathan and felt the grip relax.

'If you ever let out even a word of what didn't 'appen

I'll know of it and I'll feed your liver to the gulls if it's the last thing I do.'

With that he turned and walked away through the wood and Jonathan ran until he reached the track ahead

of the spot where the Indian had fallen. Glancing backwards he saw in grey silhouettes Sykes dragging the dead Indian from the track. Then the boy made for home as fast as his legs could take him.



CHAPTER FOUR

# *The Diary*

AS SOON AS Jonathan entered the parlour the observant Mrs. Mather noticed the wild flushed look in the boy's normally calm face and thinking that he had a fever sent him to bed with a drink of warm goat's milk. Through long hours of sleeplessness he lay wondering *why* Sykes had killed the Indian.

In the days that followed, time slowly healed the shock of his experience in the wood and the activities of the islanders became of increasing interest to his enquiring mind.

One evening after he had said goodnight to the innkeeper and his wife he sat on the bed in the flickering candlelight of his room and feeling strangely wakeful did not undress as usual. Instead he went to the small table on which lay an old and tattered accounting book which

Mr. Mather had given him 'to scribble in if he felt so inclined.'

He ripped out the used pages and sat on the wooden chair. The whalehunt that he had seen a week ago on the southern shores returned now in crystal clear images to his restless mind.

He dipped the point of the goose-quill in the ink and then with the thoroughness that was always so typical of him he wrote:

*The Diary of Jonathan Oakley, commenced the last day of May in the year 1731 at Sherburne, New England.*

On the next page he began to write in his own quaint fashion a description of the wonderful things he had seen at the whaling camp.

As the days passed there were many things to record but it was not until a year later, when time and events had lifted the burden of fear from Jonathan's mind that he made the entry telling of the murder of the Indian.

Let us take a few entries at random and form our own picture of the everyday life among these people who were destined to find their green pastures not in their island home but upon the broad waters of the Atlantic.

*Sixth of June.* On hearing the people called out I went to the wharf and watched the gambolling of a pod of humpback whales. All during the flood tide they frolicked in the water outside the bar. It is evident that they obtain their name from the arched shape of their backs. As they rolled their bodies with a forward motion I saw that each had a tall fin upon his back which is not found in the black right whale although both are of the family that carry whalebones in their mouths. When they rolled sideways I saw that the side fins were very large in proportion to the body and later when I was able to approach one of the dead whales I found that these

fins measured more than twice the height of two tall men and that the whole body measured as long as eight men if they lay head to toe on the sand alongside it.

So many whale were there that a signal was sent to the whale camps and among the men who arrived I found Joseph. Every boat along this coast was manned and upon being asked if I could pull an oar I replied that I could which was not truthful since I have had but little practice in the boats. But I sat next to Joseph and we joined in the sport. The tide having risen we coaxed the whale across the bar and confined them within the

outer harbour where amid great confusion many were slain. These humpback whales showed an inclination to sink below the surface when dead, but the water around the harbour being very shallow, the whales were soon hauled up the shore and their blubber taken off and sent to the ovens nearby for boiling.

*Eighth of June.* At dawn I was awoken by the voices of men who were loading a donkey cart with the cutting tools. Hearing them speak of a drifted sperm whale I dressed and overtook them. We walked to the southern shore and found a sixty foot male sperm whale lying dead among the surf. In its side we found two harpoons inscribed with names of foreign vessels. With great labour the men saved the blubber and carried it to the town for trying out. They also took from the head the spermaceti oil that is found in a special reservoir.

*Ninth of June.* The harbour crews to-day gave chase to a pod of right whales that were sighted in the sound but they returned without reward. Some complained that the right whale has become sensible to the sharpness of the harpoons and is in fear of our shores and the fate that there awaits them.

*Twelfth of June.* This forenoon I heard the cry of 'Sail ho!' and climbed to the lookout platform on the roof of the inn to watch two whaleships entering harbour. They are such small vessels that their holds cannot contain more than the blubber of two or three whales and in consequence their voyages last at the most only a month or two but if they are fortunate enough to meet with whale and kill them early in their voyage they may return to harbour after only a few days. Mr. Mather came up to the roof and I learned from him that these vessels have been seeking the sperm whale in southern waters and that after overhauling and recruiting (taking on fresh victuals) they will sail to the northern waters in search of the Greenland right whale which is similar in many ways to the black right whale but prefers the colder seas.

*Fifteenth of June.* Many dolphins came over the bar to-day and Joseph was permitted to practise throwing the harping irons with which he killed three. I pulled an oar with great vigour but little skill and several times missed my stroke and tumbled to the floor of the boat. Whilst we were engaged with the dolphins the steersman of the seaward boat called out, 'Town ho!' and we all gave chase in earnest to a pod of small whales and several were killed and towed ashore.

Joseph struck his first whale and is now a real whaleman, but I fear that I shall have to spend much more time at the oar before I am permitted to handle the irons. Perhaps I gave too much attention to the details of the chase and too little to the task of pulling my oar. I saw yellow coloured streaks in the water and during a lull

when we ceased pulling I was able to gather a little of this water in a can. The water was not discoloured but it contained many small sea creatures which one of the oarsmen told me was the food of the right whale.

*Eighteenth of June.* Mr. Mather has granted me my release from his service in order that I may journey to the whaling camps with Joseph and seek employment there for I am determined to master the crafts of whaling and intend that with the aid of the education that I received from my father to stand one day as master upon the poop of my own whaleship.

*Twenty-third of June.* After several days employed in the menial tasks of the whaling camp I was given the midships oar of one of the boats and we gave chase to a pod of small whales but I fear that I made such a sorry mess of the task that Master Jackson will not permit me to enter in the boats again. He made known to me his conviction that my ambition is greater than my ability and that I shall need to grow some more muscle upon my bones before I am able to pull a whaleboat's oar.

*Twenty-fourth of June.* Joseph and I are firm companions now. Upon seeing my disappointment over being kept at cleaning whale fins and other dull tasks on the beach whilst he is in the boats he made the suggestion that we should both return to the harbour and seek berths in the whaleships bound for the north. So we drew our lay of the profits and made for home.

CHAPTER FIVE

# *Jonathan finds a Berth*

THE BOYS' unexpected arrival at the inn caused some surprise to Mr. and Mrs. Mather and put the good woman in quite a flurry for the inn was full of whalemen waiting for the northern season to commence and every bed, including those of the boys, had been let for the night.

Joseph put his arm around his mother's waist.

'Do not fret, mother,' he said, 'there is plenty of dry hay in the barns and we will be just as comfortable there.'

They sat at the long table in the main parlour and ate supper with the whaling crews who were gathered here in Nantucket to man the brand new fleet of whaleships in which the islanders had invested and which was expected at any hour to arrive in the harbour.

As the men sat smoking their after-supper pipes the door flew open and a youth rushed into the parlour shouting that the ships had been sighted. The boys followed some of the men up to the lookout platform on the roof and presently Joseph pointed to the westward and shouted, 'There they come.' They were hull down over the horizon but with all sail set and travelling at a good speed towards the harbour.

The next day one of the whaling masters of these ships came to the inn and asked for Mr. Mather. Jonathan, who happened to be writing a new entry in his diary, rose

from the parlour table and conducted the captain to the private room at the back of the building.

'Your name, sir?' enquired the boy.

'Captain Slocum. Captain Jeroboam Slocum.'

He was a very tall man, gaunt of feature and bony limbed. His clothes were in the style of a merchant service captain of the time with something of the simplicity of the Quaker cut about them, and the severity and aloofness of his manner caused Jonathan to feel at once very small and very insignificant, so that it was with some relief that the boy announced his name to Mr. Mather and closed the door upon the two men.

He found Joseph cutting wood in the yard and told him of the visitor. After a while Mr. Mather called the two lads into the house.

'Captain Slocum, this is my son, Joseph, and this boy whom you have already met is Jonathan Oakley. They are both set on finding berths in one of the whaleships. Joseph has already struck his first whale and would no doubt serve you well as an oarsman or even a harpooner, but Jonathan——' and Mr. Mather placed his hand upon the boy's shoulder. 'Are you still of the same mind, lad? You are. Well then, Captain Slocum, here is a cabin boy for you.'

The captain's deepset eyes frowned upon the two lads for a second. Then he turned to Mr. Mather. 'I will take thy sons in my ship, friend. Tell them to report on board to-morrow forenoon.'

When he had gone Mr. Mather said, 'His manner may seem a little abrupt but he is a godly man and one of the best whaling masters on these coasts. We both hold a share in the vessel and having that in common with me I am sure he will serve my sons well.'

It was obvious to the boys that something was troubling Mr. Mather. They waited while he seemed to struggle with some indecision. Then he leant forward in his chair

and said, 'I wish in some ways that I could have arranged for you to sail in one of the other sloops but this was the only one with a berth left for a cabin boy. She is the biggest yet to sail out of here and is of sixty tons burden. She is bound further north than the others on an expedition to the Davis Straits. She will hunt whale but the main purpose is to discover the possibilities of extending the activities of our fleet in those waters. There may be dangers and I would not be sorry if you changed your minds. Do you still want to go?'

'I do,' said the two lads with one voice.

'Very well then, if you are set on it you must give me your solemn promises that you keep the ship's destination a secret. The vessel is called the *Pilgrim*.'

The boys murmured their promises.

In the captain's cabin of the whaler *Pilgrim* the next morning the members of the crew were assembled to sign their articles.

'Look, Joseph,' whispered Jonathan as they took their places at the end of the line, 'is that not Chimoo, the Indian harpooner from Master Jackson's camp?'

'Indeed it is,' replied Joseph. 'We should be certain of killing a few whale with him in the bow of a boat.'

'I do not see Eb Small,' said Jonathan. 'Perhaps he has signed with one of the other ships.'

When all hands were present the captain, with Mr. Mather and the two other men who held shares in the vessel standing behind him, broke the news that the ship was to visit the Davis Straits. He assured them of the soundness of the enterprise and finished his brief address with a warning that any man or boy who wished to withdraw should do so at once.

Two of the men left the cabin without a word but the rest moved into line and each came singly to the table to give his signature or mark as the case might be.

According to the rank or trade each was allotted a lay or

share of whatever profits might be made from the voyage. Jonathan, as cabin boy, received a mere 1/150th lay but Joseph, being old enough to sign as able seaman was allotted a 1/75th lay, whilst Chimoo, as harpooner, or boatheader as this rank was sometimes called, received the princely lay of 1/50th. The carpenter and the cooper also received lays of 1/50th and the 'short lays' ranging from 1/25th up to 1/8th went to the three mates and the captain. In this case the captain also drew extra share as one of the four owners.

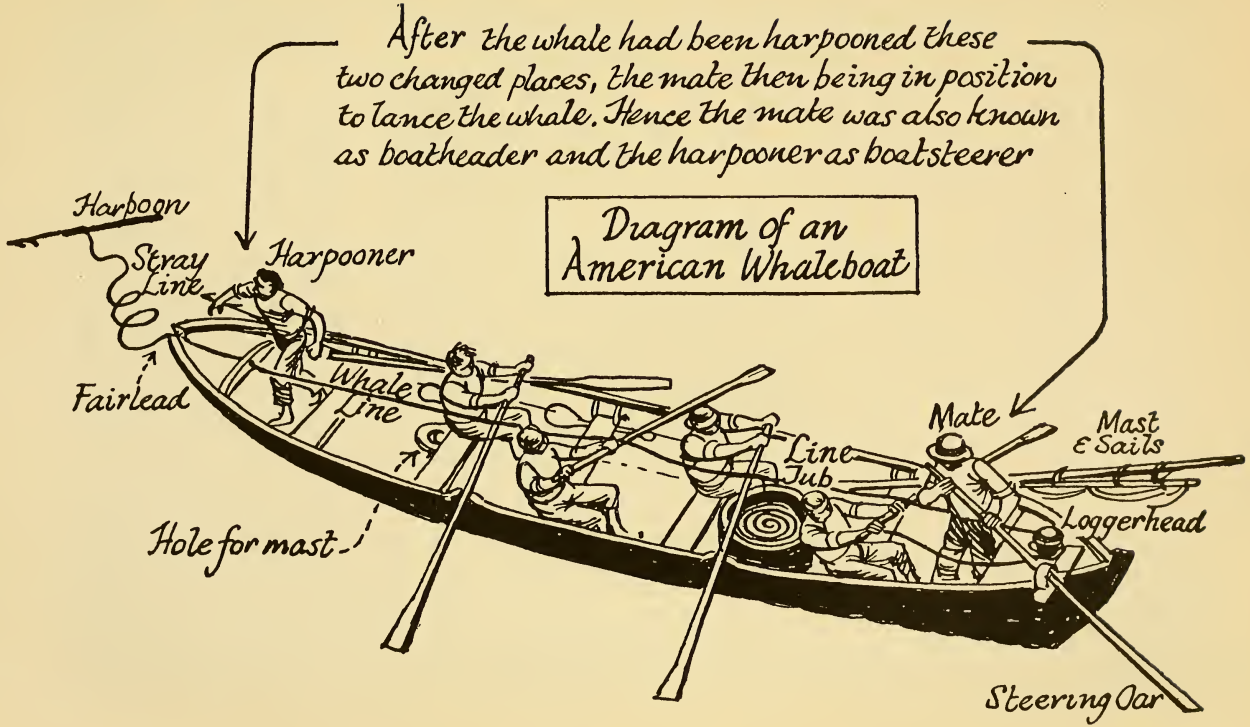
An advance of money was made to each man for the purchasing of personal equipment and then with a last word from the captain that every man was to be on board to make sail at dawn to-morrow the meeting broke up.

The boys did not follow the rest of the crew ashore. This was their first ship and the purchases could wait while they proudly looked over her.

She was a sixty tonner as Mr. Mather had said and straight from the builder's yard. Already they had looked at her from the wharf. With her broad beam and bluff bows, her low freeboard and raised poop-deck, and her single mast and fore-and-aft rig she looked not unlike a smaller version of the Dutch ships that had been seen to visit those shores, and which the marine painter Van de Velde was so fond of portraying. She was typical of the many sloops seen along the New England shores of that day. Their small drafts enabled them to enter the shallow bays and harbours whilst their fore-and-aft rig made them fast and easy to handle.

All this they had observed before boarding the ship and now they began an inspection of the main deck.

The objects which attracted the boys' interest most were the two whaleboats that lay in their chocks on the midships deck. In contrast to the bluff sturdiness of their mother ship these boats were long and narrow and lightly constructed of thin cedar planking on finely cut


After the whale had been harpooned these two changed places, the mate then being in position to lance the whale. Hence the mate was also known as boatheader and the harpooner as boatsteerer
Diagram of an American Whaleboat
Harpoon
Stray Line
Harpooner
Fairlead
Whale Line
Hole for mast
Line Tub
Mate
Mast & Sails
Loggerhead
Steering Oar

oak frames, pointed at both ends. They were in fact descended from the Indian canoes in which the natives of New England had first hunted the whale and they retained all the qualities that had made the canoe fast and manœuvrable whilst being stronger and more seaworthy. At this stage in their evolution they were about twenty-two feet long and similar to the boats the islanders used on the beaches, having five thwarts and a small triangular platform in the bow and stern; but in addition they were fitted for the task of fastening to the whale and for this purpose carried a bollard or loggerhead on the stern platform and a narrow channel or fairlead lined with lead between the converging gunwales of the bow. A wooden pin bridging this fairlead served to prevent the whale line from jumping free. The wooden loggerhead in the stern provided a means of checking the speed at which the line ran out of the boat and enabled the man manning it to strike a balance between the extravagance of allowing the line to run free and the fatal folly of securing its inboard end and being towed under by the whale; this resulted very often in the boat being taken for what was later known as a 'Nantucket sleigh ride'. The oars, paddles, mast and sail lay ready for use but the tub that contained the whale line would not be put in the boat until lowering for whale.

The sleek boats were a great advance on others the boys had seen and it was no wonder that they captured their imagination so readily.

The boys went forward and climbed through the hatch to the cramped forecastle, in which with thirteen other mariners they were to eat and sleep during the coming weeks. Furnished only with a table and two seating forms, all of which were bolted securely to the deck, and with a plentiful crop of iron hooks in the beams and bulkheads for the purposes of swinging hammocks and hanging clothes, this tiny triangular compartment might have been partitioned from the main hold as an afterthought

by the shipbuilder who, in the final stages of his task, was suddenly reminded of the necessity of providing a place of shelter for the men who were to man the ship. It was only a little bigger than the officers' cabin in which they had just signed their articles and Jonathan realised that the custom of providing each officer with about four times the space allotted to each seaman was in itself sufficient incentive to a greenish cabin boy to aim at attaining in the vague and distant future a place of authority upon the poop-deck.

The lads made a quick survey of the galley which adjoined the forecastle and in which Jonathan was to receive from an old Basque cook his initiation into the mysterious craft of preparing shipboard meals on the rolling seas, a prospect over which Jonathan was unable to muster much enthusiasm but which he knew must face every boy embarking on his first whaling voyage.

In the afternoon, having completed the purchasing of their outfits the boys loaded their kitbags on to a hand-cart and upon the bags Jonathan placed an iron-bound wooden box, a present from Mr. Mather. It contained a jar of ink, a supply of paper and quills, a copy of John Bunyan's *Country Rhimes for Boys and Girls* and a small brass crucifix given by Mrs. Mather.

The good lady stood at the door of the inn and watched with moist eyes the youthful figures disappearing towards the wharf.

As soon as they had stowed their kit they joined the others in helping to bring on board the last of the stores and equipment and by dusk the *Pilgrim* was in all respects ready to proceed to sea; except for one very important item—her crew.

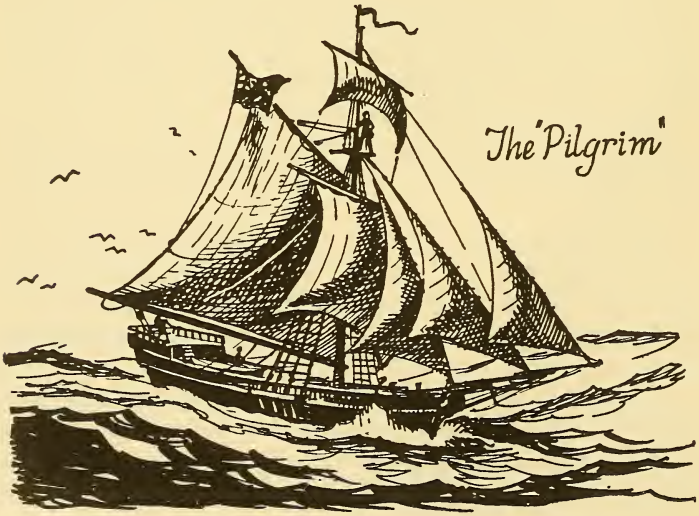
Four of the fourteen forecastle hands had apparently deserted. At the dawn roll call they were still missing and two of the mates spent the day in a fruitless search of the island. After dark the captain himself went ashore

with the mates to recruit fresh men and when Jonathan and Joseph slung their hammocks there was still no news that their efforts had been successful.

But when they were called to scrub decks at dawn they saw that all but one of the hammocks in the forecastle had been slept in.

'Other one, he in boat,' Chimoo explained, nodding towards the whaleboats on the deck.

After breakfast mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts came to wish their menfolk farewell. Mrs. Mather gathered up both boys in one big tearful embrace and then at a sharp order from the first mate the decks were cleared. The warps were taken in, the headsails hoisted and the vessel ghosted away from the wharf into the morning mist leaving behind her a sad little group of people, amongst whom there was one, Mr. Richard Mather, whose mind was troubled by having just been told the identity of the man who still lay in a drunken sleep at the bottom of one of the *Pilgrim's* whaleboats.



## CHAPTER SIX

# *On Passage*

THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS delay had soured the captain and angered the mates and the general temper of the ship's company was not improved by the absence of a good sailing breeze. The ship was still in sight of the harbour when Jonathan and the steward carried the mid-day meal aft to the officers' quarters where the atmosphere struck Jonathan as being very tense.

None of these matters had much effect upon the boy to whom everything was so new and exciting; but as he emerged from the after hatchway bearing a pile of dirty dishes he was confronted with what he could only believe at first was a horrible vision. Staring at him from over the gunwale of the larboard whaleboat was the black-bearded, sleep puffed face of Nathaniel Sykes.

'So you 'ave chose to ship along with old Nat, 'ave you, young Jonah? Well, well, let's 'ope we 'ave a merry time together.'

The voice of the mate on watch bellowed from aft, 'Get your lazy carcass out of that boat and turn to at once,' and Sykes climbed slowly out on to the deck.

The dreaded secret of the murder in the wood lay heavy on the boy's spirit but he remembered his vow of silence, which even though made to a blackguard like Sykes could not be broken without loss of honour. Chimoo he knew came from the same village as the murdered brave

and it was probable that the other two Indians in the crew came from there too. He would try to discover by watching the behaviour of the three Indians whether they knew or suspected the identity of the murderer of their fellow tribesman.

The news of Sykes's presence spread quickly through the ship for he was an infamous character, but it was too early yet for Jonathan to detect any signs of enmity between Sykes and the Indians, although he was able to learn from Joseph that the man had signed in the *Pilgrim* in order to escape from the wrath of the tribe whom he had cheated in a trading deal.

As the two lads sat discussing the matter in the forecastle something of Jonathan's uneasiness must have been evident in his manner for Joseph said, 'Why do you look so troubled, Jonathan? Surely you have nothing to fear from the rascal?'

Jonathan forced a smile and replied, 'No, of course not,' but he wished in his heart that he could share his secret with his friend.

'Captain Slocum and the mates will see that he is kept in his place,' said Joseph.

Indeed, as the wind became favourable and the ship headed north, Sykes settled into the routine of the voyage as well as the rest for he was an experienced whaleman and a good seaman.

The ship's company was assembled on deck and divided into watches and the captain, as was the custom at the commencement of a whaling voyage, expounded a few of his views on such subjects as discipline, hard work, courage, cheerfulness and faith in the Almighty. He used the Quaker 'thee' and 'thou' and this, combined with his Biblical style of speech, made it seem that the Ten Commandments with which he rounded off his address were not quoted from the Book but inventions of his own mind like the rest of his harangue.

*Joseph taking over the helm from Chimoo under the stern eye of the proud Quaker Captain.*

It occurred to Jonathan as he watched the tall gaunt figure that the man might even think himself some sort of god, so superior was he in his attitude to his men.

On the third morning the lookout sighted two of the sloops that had sailed ahead of the *Pilgrim*. The vessels were hove to in a southerly breeze and their boats were away to leeward of them. At first the *Pilgrim's* men thought they were after whale but on drawing closer they found that the boats were being exercised.

'Bring her close to leeward of the *Red Rose*, helmsman,' ordered the captain, but the poor man at the wheel was not so familiar with Sherburne whalers as was his commander who, on seeing that the man was steering for the

wrong sloop, roared, 'To starboard, thou fool! Dost thou not know the *Red Rose* when thou seest her?'

As the *Pilgrim* and the *Red Rose* came beam to beam Captain Slocum cupped his hands to his mouth and called to his colleague across the water, 'Why dost thou waste such a fair breeze, Master Jason.'

'We sighted black whale, Master Slocum,' came back the reply, 'but these men of ours are greener than spring cabbages and made such a sorry affair of the chase that we chose to keep them at it in the boats so that they may be sure of the difference between an oar and a harping iron the next time we meet up with the whale.'

As the *Pilgrim* drew away the remaining words of the *Red Rose's* captain were lost on the wind.

During the following day the *Pilgrim* passed at different times two of the Nantucket sloops returning to port and on each occasion, upon being hailed and asked what success they had had, they reported full cargoes of blubber. There were murmurs of envy from the *Pilgrim's* men for although these sloops were of only about thirty tons burden and their cargo capacity not much more than required for the blubber of one large whale, they had been at sea for only eight days. In addition to their cargoes of blubber they reported good catches of cod, for it was customary in these small ships for men not employed on lookout duties to employ their time catching fish. In fact, most whaling voyages about this time were not confined entirely to the hunting of whale but to alternative pursuits such as catching fish, seal and walrus and trading with natives.

On the tenth day the ship was beset by a dead calm near the southern entrance of the Belle Isle Straits between Newfoundland and the mainland. After hours of pacing the deck and calling upon his Maker for a capful of wind Captain Slocum stopped suddenly in his tracks and shouted, 'There are whales two miles on your starboard bow! Call all hands! Lower the boats!'

Even the mate of the watch looked dumbfounded as he scanned the sea in vain for the sight of a spout.

'Mr. Todd!' roared the captain. 'Didst thou hear me or art thou deaf? Those whale will escape us before we sink a single iron. Stir thyself, man! Wake up, wake up!'

After that the sleepy ship came suddenly to life and within a few minutes the two boats were in the water and the crews pulling as if their very lives depended upon it. But they had barely cleared away from the ship's side when the Captain's voice boomed at them across the water.

'Why, thou art like a lot of snails. Hoist the boats and let me see thy bottoms seated in half the time.'

No matter what operation was attempted, whether loading the gear into the boats, pulling, hoisting and lowering sail or sterning the oars the captain's desire for speed could not be satisfied. But on the fourth lowering even he grew tired of his own bellowings and the boats' crews pulled away from the ship to find some peace out of range of their commander's fiery nature.

Then to the southward the oily surface of the sea became marked with the catspaws of wind and the boats returned to the ship, their sails taut and their oars dipping. They were hoisted laboriously to the deck, and the *Pilgrim* continued on her voyage.

When the ship had settled down one of the green hands looked up from coiling down a rope. There was a frown on his youthful face as he spoke to Todd, the second mate. 'I saw no sign of a spout, did you, sir?'

'No, my lad, but the captain has a most wonderful sharp pair of eyes,' replied the diminutive Todd with a laugh.

The *Pilgrim* passed through the Belle Isle Straits and then followed the rocky coast of Labrador until she arrived at Esquimo Bay where she anchored and took on water.

As the casks were being hoisted over the side Jonathan, on his way along the deck to the officers' quarters, overheard Sykes talking with some of the men.

'Not a single spout 'ave we raised this whole voyage,' he was saying. 'Not one. I tell you we should 'ave gone to the Grand Banks and cruised there like the others. Their casks will be full of blubber by now, but look at us, not even a porpoise 'ave we taken and not a stain upon the lilywhite decks. I tell you——' and the rest of Sykes's words were lost to Jonathan as he descended the after hatchway.

That evening the ship was still at anchor in the calm

waters of the bay and Jonathan availed himself of this opportunity to make some observations in his diary. As he sat at the forecastle table, the only sounds were the scratching of his quill and the muffled creak of slack rigging. Yet he sensed something disturbing in the quiet of the dimly lit forecastle and he turned and looked up at one of the swinging hammocks. Through a haze of tobacco smoke and screen of matted black whiskers the baleful eyes of Nathaniel Sykes were watching him closely.

Nothing was said and Jonathan went on with his writing but all the time he knew that those eyes, full of suspicion and hate, were boring into his very soul.

The *Pilgrim* weighed anchor and continued her voyage, but no whales were sighted until one morning there came into view a fleet of Esquimo *oomiaks* which it soon became obvious were in pursuit of a large right whale.

The captain ordered sail to be reduced in the hope that other whales would be sighted; but it is not the habit of right whales as it is with the sperm to remain in the vicinity of a stricken comrade and none were sighted.

As the ship ghosted along at slow speed Jonathan stood upon the forecastle head and watched the Esquimos.

Each narrow craft, constructed with sealskins stretched over frail wooden frames, was being propelled at furious speed by a crew of fur-clad Esquimos with paddles. They were continually dashing in and thrusting their stings into their massive prey, like a swarm of angry wasps. Each of the *oomiaks* carried a supply of spears to which were attached bladders of inflated sealskin and as one after another of these spears was implanted by the intrepid Esquimos more and more of the sealskin bladders became attached to the whale. They bobbed and bounced in the white water beside the whale as he swam but did not appear to make any appreciable reduction in his speed. But, when he dipped his head and lifted his flukes to sound, the bladders clung to the surface until the last

moment and the cunning method of the Esquimos at once became obvious to Jonathan. Those bladders must retard his downward motion through the water and the greater number that were attached the smaller was the whale's chance of escape; which was of course the reason why the hunters had attacked so furiously and in such large numbers. Furthermore, although Jonathan was unaware of the fact, these hunters employed a cunning toggle device which turned the barb of the spearhead and caused it to stick fast and prick the flesh of the whale when the line became taut.

When the whale surfaced again the Esquimo *oomiaks* crowded in on him once more approaching from ahead to avoid the great tail flukes that thrashed through a wide arc which reached even to the creature's side fins. One of the craft within that arc was swept away as easily as a fly is swept away by a horse's tail. Then the monster tried to dive but came up quickly carrying one of the *oomiaks* to the summit of its body and in the brief second that the frail craft poised balanced there the Esquimo in the bows reached out an arm and thrust a spear deep into the whale's side. The next instant the craft slid down the whale's side throwing the crew into the welter of white water that surrounded the whale.

The spear of that brave hunter must have found its mark for Jonathan saw that the next spout was blood red.

The *oomiaks* withdrew after rescuing the Esquimos and waited; the *Pilgrim*, still under reduced sail, slid past the scene; the native hunters and the New England whalemen watched the drama of the whale in all the fury of its last flurry as it thrashed, rolled and spouted red. Then it turned upon one side and the ten foot side fin pointed to the sky.

The ship passed on.

As Jonathan walked along the deck to resume his duties he heard the guttural voice of Nathaniel Sykes saying,

'Even the Esquimos find whale. I tell you there's a Jonah aboard this ship and I've a pretty good notion who it is. 'Is name fits 'im well and 'e's for 'ever scratchin' away with a quill like some seaborne agent of the Devil.'

Jonathan's face coloured as he heard these words, so obviously intended for his ears.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# *'She Blows!'*

A HIGH SEA was running as the *Pilgrim* crossed the entrance to the Hudson Straits and her company was very relieved when the captain sailed her into the lee of Resolution Island at the southern tip of Baffin Land.

As the ship lay hove to waiting for the storm to pass Jonathan stood on deck and gazed for a while at the distant snow-clad peaks, but the icy north wind cut through his clothes and he was soon glad to seek shelter below decks where a different kind of coldness awaited him in the sidelong glances of some of the white men. Jonathan guessed that the superstitious talk of Sykes had had some effect upon the simple minds of these rough seamen and although they were in the minority it made him feel miserable to be regarded as an omen of ill luck in the ship. As he lay in his hammock listening to the sea slapping against the ship's hull it occurred to him that although Sykes himself might be the victim of such superstitions the real reason for infecting the men's minds with them might be to gain the backing of as many as possible of the crew should it become necessary to rid the ship of the one person who could expose his guilt. Once the three Indian members of the crew had proof that their tribesman had been murdered by Sykes the man's own life would be in danger. Chimoo and his two friends probably

knew that the Indian had died; they might even suspect Sykes but it was evident that they had no real proof.

When Joseph came below at the changing of the watch Jonathan leant over the edge of his hammock and whispered anxiously, 'Is there any sign of whale yet?'

Joseph smiled. 'No, Jonathan, and even if there were we would not be able to hunt in this weather.' His smiling face became suddenly grave. 'I know you are still troubled about the superstitions of that fellow Sykes, but it often happens that a ship does not sight a whale for weeks together and then a malady known as whale sickness comes over the company and they fall prey to any kind of foolish talk. Be of good cheer, Jonathan, for we are bound to find whale soon and then these chummies will have no time for Sykes and his superstitions. Chimoo and his two kinsmen hate the man and I am sure that it is not merely because he cheated their tribe.'

Once again Jonathan pushed aside the impulse to tell Joseph the truth.

Joseph tousled the boy's fair curls and then playfully pulled him out of his hammock on to the deck and as they rolled over and over in a mock wrestling match Chimoo descended the companionway.

'Jonathan call Chimoo if he want help,' said the Indian showing his fine white teeth in a grin.

Jonathan glanced up from under his opponent's elbow.

'Perhaps I shall when I *really* need you, Chimoo,' he panted.

As soon as the wind abated the *Pilgrim* felt her way out into the open waters of the Davis Straits where a line of five icebergs sat sedate and unmoved by the high swell that still rolled down from the north. As Jonathan stood upon the bows fascinated by their monumental aloofness the sun suddenly shone through the clouds and changed their colour from a cold flat white to blue and gold. He watched the ever present fulmars wheeling around the

ship; a lazy seal slid reluctantly from an ice floe as the vessel approached. The ship was sailing into a wonderful new world where days and nights begin to merge into one long afternoon, but for Jonathan one thing was needed to make it complete—the spout of a whale.

A haze covered the sun and cut short the brief glory of the sub-Arctic summer and one by one the icebergs to the eastwards became wrapped in an advancing bank of fog until only the summits of the highest were still visible.

On the poop-deck Macy, the burly first mate, took final compass bearings of the bergs and the distant peaks of Baffin Land. The fog bank advanced and Jonathan felt its cold touch as it covered the ship, whose upperworks now became mere grey silhouettes which lost their sharpness of definition as they receded from the eye into the grey yet oddly luminous murk.

Jonathan went below to the galley where old Pierre the Basque cook reviled him for having stayed so long on deck. Normally Jonathan would not have been worried by the outburst for Pierre was always scolding him for being on deck instead of in the galley but on this occasion he could detect real anger in the Frenchman's manner and he knew at once that yet another of the ship's company had fallen prey to the belief that there was a 'Jonah' on board.

The fog grew thicker. On a well-charted coast the captain would probably have sought an anchorage as soon as he saw the fog approaching but the coast of Baffin Land was only vaguely defined upon his charts and he decided to sail slowly north-eastwards under a single staysail away from the dangers of the rocky shore and into the open waters which he realised were only slightly less dangerous by reason of the risk of collision with icebergs.

For two days the ship crept through the murk with lookouts stationed aloft and on the bowsprit and nothing was sighted.

Many times Jonathan noticed the brooding eyes of Sykes cast in his direction and once when Jonathan and Chimoo stood together on the foredeck the boy saw those eyes darken with hate and fear. Chimoo saw them too but he said nothing.

On the third day of fog came a call from the forward lookout, 'Ice ahead! Ice ahead! Starboard your helm! To starboard, to starboard!——' and the rest of the words that he continued to shout as he scrambled to safety along the bowsprit were swallowed up by the spine-chilling crash that followed as the ship hit a towering cliff of ice.

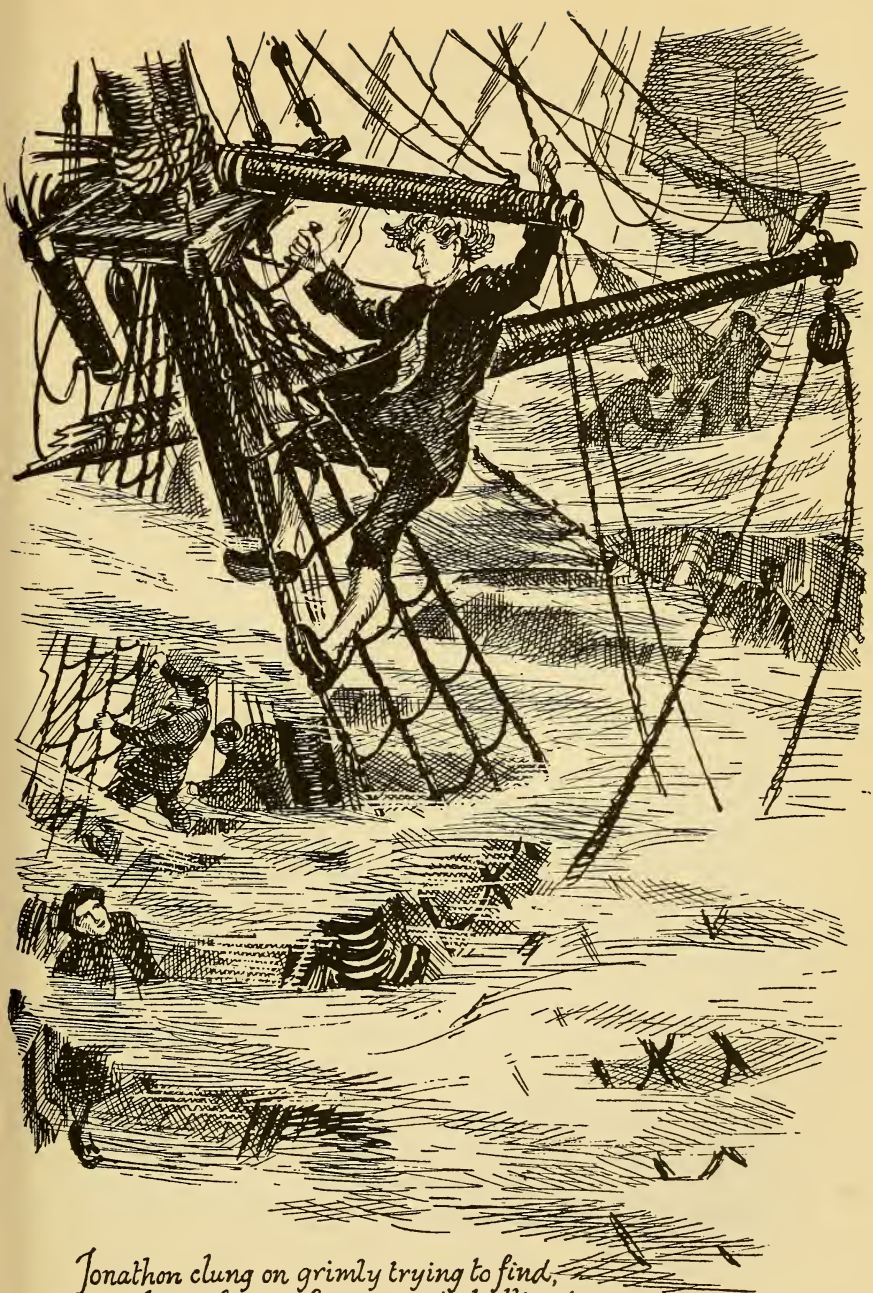
Jonathan had been serving the midday meal to Macy the first mate and now he followed the man up the companionway and along the main deck to the bows which had taken the main brunt of the collision. The smashed bowsprit hung in a tangle of sails and rigging and the forward bulwarks had been stove in; the single staysail was still filled by the faint breeze which kept the ship pressed against the face of the ice and with each lift of the swell came a sickening grinding of wood against ice.

'Lower that sail!' shouted Macy and through the fog came the reply, 'The halliard is jammed, sir, and will not come free!'

'Then go aloft and free it, you fools!' cried Macy.

But no man moved for the topmast was scraping an overhanging buttress of the ice and the larboard crosstree had already been smashed. The masthead lookout had already forsaken his dangerous perch and Joseph and Chimoo were engaged in trying to clear away the tangled forward rigging.

Jonathan saw Macy move but in the same second that it took the mate to reach the starboard shrouds the boy leapt ahead of him and scrambled aloft to the crosstrees. The ship rolled and the mast moved through an arc away from the ice; then, like an inverted pendulum, it stopped



Jonathon clung on grimly trying to find, amid the confusion of rigging, the halliard that held the wayward staysail.

and swung back through the same arc and crashed against the ice.

Jonathan clung on grimly with beating heart trying to find amid the confusion of rigging the halliard that held the wayward staysail. At last he found it and drawing his knife from its sheath he hacked it clear of the block in which it had jammed. The sail tumbled down to the foredeck and the men with spars were able to push the ship's bows clear of the ice. Jonathan saw the white overhanging cliff recede into the fog and disappear.

Just then he felt a strange warmth touch his face and above him the grey fog grew lighter and lighter till it dropped like a veil and left him isolated in a new world of clear and sparkling sunlight. The deck below was still invisible and nearby, the iceberg rose like a white rocky island out of the grey sea of fog. Away to the eastward he saw the blue line of the horizon which even as he watched grew broader and broader as the fog drifted westward. On that horizon he saw another iceberg that looked curiously like a crouching white rabbit. Then upon the blue band of the sea he saw something that caused his heart to beat anew. A tall white plume rose up for about three seconds and then disappeared.

Summoning all the strength of his lungs he called out to those below the words that they had waited so long to hear.

'Town ho! Town ho! She blo-o-ows!'

And from below, out of the fog, came the response. 'Where away?' in the deep bass tones of the captain's voice.

'Two points on the larboard bow!' called Jonathan.

'How far off?'

'About two miles!'

Up through the fast disappearing fog came the wide-eyed faces of men eager for the sight of the whale.

'Come down from the rigging, all of you,' called Macy. 'None of you had the spunk to climb it when I ordered.

You left it to the child to show you the way. Come down, I say, or I'll have you all flogged.'

Jonathan followed them down the ratlines, but the captain called out to Macy, 'Keep the lad in the rigging and tell him to keep the whale in sight. Hoist the mainsail if thou art able.'

The boy remained on the ratlines until the sail was hoisted and then he climbed once more to the damaged crosstrees. As he did so the last of the fog cleared away so that everyone on the deck was now able to see the whale.

'It is a lone Greenland whale, Mr. Macy,' called the captain as he inspected it through a telescope. 'Steer Nor'-nor'-east,' he ordered and the helmsman leaned on the tiller and Todd, the second mate, trimmed the mainsheet.

'Mr. Todd, prepare to lower the starboard boat!' boomed the captain and at once the deck became the scene of rapid activity as the whaling gear was fetched and loaded into one of the boats; harpoons, lances, linetubs and drogues, all were stowed into their allotted places in the long frail-looking craft.

'The rest of the company under Mr. Macy will start repairing ship,' and the captain looked up at Jonathan. 'And thou, boy,' he shouted, 'keep thine eyes open for the sight of other whales.'

The *Pilgrim* limped slowly towards the whale which continued to spout until the ship was about a mile distant. Then it sounded and when after fifteen minutes it broke surface it was about a quarter of a mile on the larboard beam and to leeward of the vessel.

At once the captain ordered the mainsail to be lowered and the boat to be swung out. The davits or cranes that were such a prominent feature along the sides of whalers later in the eighteenth century had not yet been devised and the lowering of the whaleboat took many precious minutes to complete by the much slower method of using

tackles suspended from the main rigging; but with some of the crew working at the windlass and others manhandling her over the side the boat was eventually got into the water. The crew scrambled into their places, Chimoo with his bright coloured headdress seated in the bows, Todd wielding the long steering oar in the stern and Joseph one of the five oarsmen. They pulled clear of the ship and then hoisted sail. With the wind astern and the five oars dipping rhythmically the boat bore down upon the whale which was swimming away from them and spouting at regular intervals. The head of the Greenland right whale was arched at the top and it was this curious feature which caused it to be given the name of 'bowhead'. It sounded before the boat could overtake it but Todd pressed his craft onwards. A mile astern the *Pilgrim* followed like a mother watching her venturesome child.

In about a quarter of an hour the whale broke surface only a few hundred yards from the boat.

Now Chimoo shipped his oar, took up his harpoon and stood poised in the bows. The sail was lowered and the oarsmen manœuvred the boat to approach the bowhead at an angle which would keep them clear of the tail. Then Chimoo's arm swept forward thrusting his harpoon through the air across the few feet that divided him from the whale. Another harpoon followed in quick succession and the whale set off at full speed along the surface, taking with it the line and the wooden drogues designed to check its speed. There was 250 fathom of this hemp line coiled down in the big tub near the stern of the boat and it passed between the larboard and starboard banks of oarsmen, over the looms of their oars and out of the boat through the specially shaped fairlead on the extreme point of the bows.

Todd the mate now left his steering oar trailing astern and began checking the outward run of the line by passing

it a few times around the stout wooden bollard or loggerhead that was built into the small triangular platform in the stern. When about fifty fathom had run out of the tub he took two more turns with the line and gripped it firmly in his hands. At once the boat began to plane over the surface in tow of the whale and the crests of the long swell plucked at the taut hempen line making it quiver like a bowstring and drop little white curtains of droplets.

The white plume under the boat's bows grew smaller and it became obvious to Jonathan that the whale was slackening speed. The strain on the line eased and the crew, who had shipped their oars as soon as the wild ride had begun, now commenced hauling in on the line.

Meanwhile Todd had moved from the stern to the bow and Chimoo, having accomplished the first and most important part of his duties as harpooner, had taken the mate's place in the stern where he coiled down the line as it was hauled in by the rest of the crew.

When the boat was only a few fathoms away from the whale the men manned their oars and with Todd waving instructions to Chimoo the boat was brought into a favourable position for the attack with the lance. Todd, gnome-like in a pointed woollen hat, stood ready with his weapon lifted at arm's length. Then the whale sounded but its strength was waning fast and it could not remain below the water for more than a few minutes. When it broke surface the boat leapt towards it like a hungry lean beast of prey and this time Todd's lance found its mark, for the monster spouted red and with a final lash of its tail rolled over and died.

With a cheer from the men who were still at work on the repairs, the *Pilgrim* closed in upon the scene and the whale was secured alongside.

Jonathan in his perch aloft kept watch for more whales but this seemed to be the only one in the area, which indeed was not surprising seeing that the Greenland right

North Pole
ARCTIC OCEAN
Greenland right whales or 'bowheads' now almost extinct
Spitzbergen
THE VOYAGES of THREE WHALESHIPS
Factory Ship 'WANDERER' 1953 —·—·
Barque 'MERIBAH' 1845 ---
Sloop 'PILGRIM' 1731 ——
GREEN-LAND
Pilgrim hunts greenland Right whales 1751
ICELAND
NORWAY
Arctic Circle
Bering Straits
Arctic Circle
BERING SEA
Davis Straits
NORTH AMERICA
Black right whales now very scarce
Leith
EUROPE
ASIA
PACIFIC OCEAN
PACIFIC
Nantucket Island
Azores
ATLANTIC
Honolulu (Hawaii)
Cape Verde Islands
AFRICA
Equator
Equator
Polynesian Islands
SOUTH AMER-ICA
OCEAN
INDIAN
Polynesian Islands
Fiji Islands
Meribah hunts Sperm whales 1845
AUSTRALIA
Cape Town
Two People Bay
Bay of Islands NEW ZEALAND
Talcahuano
Tristan da Cunha
ROARING FORTIES
TASMANIA
NEW ZEALAND
Bay of Islands
OCEAN
OCEAN
Falkland Islands
South Georgia
Cape Horn
Antarctic Circle
Helicopters are seen spotting for whales
The Southern Wanderer and her catchers hunt blue and fin whales 1953
ANTARCTICA
South Pole
Geoffrey Whittaker

whales were lovers of the ice fringe and that the *Pilgrim* was still not yet in those higher latitudes where they could be expected to be found in plenty.

The boy looked down at the dead whale as it wallowed under the ship's side. It was dark in colour and not unlike the black right whales he had seen on the shores of the island; but it had a white patch on its chin and on its head that peculiar bump that he had noticed when it was swimming; another difference was that it did not have on its snout the barnacle-clustered 'bonnet' that the black right whales had. He recalled how Mr. Mather had told him that it was the thick blubber of the Greenland whale and its high yield of oil that had attracted the big Dutch, German and English whaleships to the inhospitable Arctic waters. The other reason they had gone there, he had said, was that ever since the days of the Basque whalers in the twelfth century the right whales which once swam in great numbers around the European coasts had been hunted until there were none left and the whaleships had had to seek fresh ground in more distant waters.

Jonathan had also learnt that the same process was taking shape along the New England shores as the right whales there grew less and less plentiful. The sperm whale which was a much more formidable opponent than either of the right whales was already being pursued in the warmer southern seas and throughout the next hundred years it was to provide the New England whalemen and the Nantucketers in particular with a seemingly endless source of oil.

The task of stripping the blubber from the whale in mid-ocean was a long and arduous one, for the *Pilgrim* was barely twice the weight of this immature Greenland whale and even had her men known of the more efficient method of hanging a cutting tackle in the rigging they could not have used it in so small a ship.

Some working from the boat and some upon the slippery whale itself the men hacked away big hunks of blubber whilst others hauled it aboard with ropes and grapnels. They used the capstan when they could but most of the effort came from the strength of their arms.

Jonathan could not help laughing at the sight of the men slithering about on the back of the whale but his amusement was suddenly cut short when one of them tumbled into the icy sea. In a few seconds his shipmates had him safely in the boat; and none too soon, thought Jonathan as he watched a pod of killer whales cruising inquisitively at a short distance.

The killer is the only cannibal member of the whale family. In shape and speed it is like a porpoise and the males measure in length up to thirty feet.

Suddenly the killer whales closed in and like a pack of hungry wolves began attacking the dead whale. Jonathan noticed that no one ventured from the boat now. Even as the men worked to remove the rest of the blubber the killers were biting at the jaws of the dead bowhead and the boy watching from the masthead wondered at the reason for this until he saw them tear out the huge tongue which otherwise might have filled several barrels with precious blubber.

During the 'cutting in' the wind had increased and the *Pilgrim* now rolled so badly that the captain decided it was not worth trying to remove the whalebone from the mangled head. So the boat was hoisted and course set for the west coast of Greenland where whales were sure to be found in plenty.

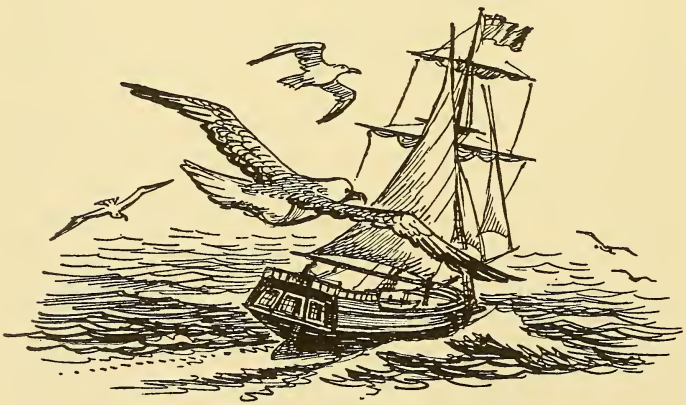
When at last Jonathan was relieved at the masthead and descended to the deck he read at once in the faces of the men that the prejudice which had turned some of them against him had been replaced by admiration at his having saved the ship and sighted the whale. Some were open in their praise and clapped him on the shoulders

whilst others, ashamed of their earlier superstitions or their lack of courage in the face of danger, were more diffident; but the attitude of Sykes towards the boy had not changed; nor could it be expected to do so whilst the fear of his guilt being communicated to the Indians gnawed deeper and deeper into his black heart.

There was no room now in the minds of the men for any scheme he might have for turning them against the boy and as the ship sailed on its way he found himself shunned and alone.

The task of chopping up the large pieces of blubber and stowing it in the casks in the hold was soon completed. The decks, christened at last with the blood and oil of the whale, were scrubbed as clean as ever.

With her rigging repaired and all sails filling the little *Pilgrim* reached for the Arctic Circle. The fulmars in her wake heard the voices of men chanting songs of their homeland and joined chorus with their own sad cries.



CHAPTER EIGHT

# *The Elusive Bowhead*

'WHEN I WAS in Spitzbergen,' old Pierre the cook was saying as he and Jonathan stood in the galley picking weevils from the flour, 'the Dutchmen, they have their tryworks on the shore and men live there during the season in huts. The ships bring the whales to the shore and the men they cut them up and boil out the oil just like in New England. Then when the season is finished and the bad Arctic weather come the ships they take the oil and the whalefins to their homelands. The German and the English, they do the same thing, but always it is the Dutchmen who are the finest whalemen. Before that it was my people along the Biscay shore who catch the whale best. Then we kill all the whales on our shores and we do not prosper. So we go in the ships of other countries and show them how it is that we catch the whale.'

'Is that how you came to sail in a Dutch ship?' asked Jonathan.

'No; the Dutchmen 'ave learned by then; but it is why *mon grandpère* sail in her,' continued Pierre, '*et mon père aussi. Mais pour moi*,' and he shrugged his broad, bent shoulders, 'I go because it is in the blood of my family to hunt whale. In our villages on the Biscay coast a man can fish or catch whale. I catch whale. But now I have too many years and they say I am good only to cook. So

I come to the new country but there they say again I have too many years to go in the boats. It is a country for the young, this America and I send a letter to my three sons to come and they will find much to do in the whaleships because the whalemen here know so little of how to catch the whale.'

'But surely the New Englanders are experts in the art already?' Jonathan interposed.

'Only on their own beaches,' replied Pierre. 'Perhaps you see something of the ships from Europe in these Straits, yes? And then you find that the Quaker ship you sail in is not such a fine whaler after all. Now fetch me some salt pork from that cask and then tell Mr. Macy that we shall need some more flour.'

Jonathan found Macy with a telescope clasped to his eye and looking in the same direction the boy saw a line of snow covered peaks that were the mountains of Greenland. Patches of drifting ice scattered the sea and the helmsman was picking a way for the ship between them.

As often as he could get away from the galley Jonathan went on deck watching the ship's progress.

By the time that the watches changed at midnight the coast was in full view in the light of the midnight sun. Snow covered all but the lower fringe of that mountainous land. It was the month of July and soon the ruthless Arctic would repulse the bold invasion of summer and cover sea and land alike with a cloak of white that would last until May or June of the following year.

With this knowledge the captain steered his ship towards the ice to seek the Greenland whale and fill his holds with blubber as quickly as possible.

Soon the cry of 'Town ho!' sent the men tumbling into the boats which had been lowered and towed in readiness. They sped across the water and one of the boats quickly made fast to one of the whales which swam off along the surface with the boat in tow. It reached a large iceberg

under which it dived for refuge so that the harpooner was forced to cut the line to save the boat from disaster. Though they cruised around the berg for a long while neither boat sighted that whale again and the rest of the whales had been 'gallied' or frightened and had disappeared as soon as the first had been struck.

When they found a school of humpback whales gambolling around a berg they killed one but the body sank before they could bring it to the ship.

They sighted several big blue whales and finback whales but these fellows quickly outdistanced the boats by swimming away at great speed.

So the boats returned to the *Pilgrim*, the crews crestfallen at their failure to repeat the success they had made of their earlier hunt.

Taking the craft in tow the *Pilgrim* cruised between the ice and soon found more Greenland whales. But again their efforts were thwarted for in addition to running for the ice there were other tricks these whales could play. Most animals tend to develop defensive tactics if they are hunted by man or beasts of prey; such was the case with these whales which the ships of Europe had been hunting for many decades. One of their disconcerting habits was to settle below the surface as the boats approached so that although visible to the eye they were invulnerable to the harpoon. Then there was the trick of arching their backs and presenting an impenetrable target of curiously taut blubber to the dismayed harpooner whose iron rebounded as it would from a metal shield. At other times an area of sea would seem one moment to be swarming with Greenland whales and the next they would disappear as if by magic. In the open sea it would not have been difficult to find them again but among the ice where there were so few passages a boat could follow it was almost impossible.

At last by dint of their persistent efforts the men of the *Pilgrim* attached both their boats to one and hung on to the

lines until it broke surface exhausted after a deep dive. This one did not escape them and once it was at bay the ease with which the monster was despatched seemed almost unbelievable.

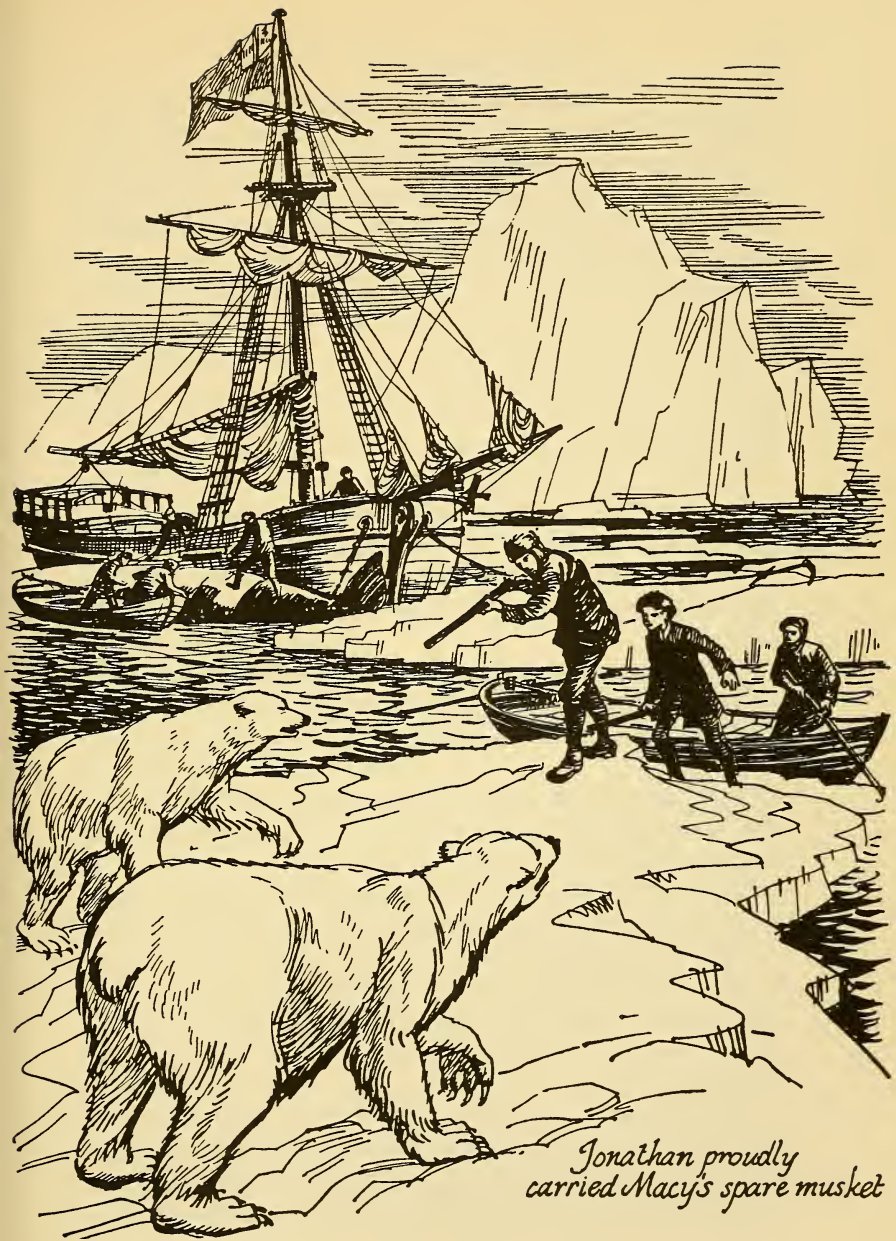
The *Pilgrim* was secured to the ice by means of a special anchor in such a way that she was held by the wind in a clear patch of open water. The whale was taken in tow by the two boats and in line ahead the procession made at a very slow pace for the ship, for even the combined power of ten oars and two sails could make but little impression on sixty-five tons of dead whale.

Cutting in commenced at once and this proved much easier with the ship in the shelter of the ice than it had been in mid-ocean and by the end of the day all the blubber was stowed in the barrels and the bundles of whalebone in the hold where they would await a more leisurely period before being scraped and cleaned. On this occasion the whale's tongue was not stolen by the killers and provided a valuable yield of blubber.

In the clear Arctic air the scent of meat soon reached the keen nostrils of several polar bears which usually feed on seals. They came lumbering over the floes and swimming through the water that divided them. When these creatures ventured too near the boats Macy the mate was forced to scare them off with musket shot but they continued to linger expectantly on the nearby floes and eventually he took one of the boats on an expedition in which Jonathan proudly pulled an oar and carried Macy's spare musket. When they had killed two bears and scared off the rest Jonathan caught sight of an animal that looked like a fierce overgrown seal with long tusks and at once Macy ordered the boat into pursuit.

'It is a sea morse,' said Macy, 'and I'll have his hide as soon as you chummies can row me to him.'

He landed on the floe and with Jonathan bringing up



*Jonathan proudly carried Macy's spare musket*

the rear with the spare musket he was able to approach and kill the walrus with one shot.

Jonathan ran to where the animal lay and together he and Macy stood looking down at the curiously formed body with its tusks in the upper jaw and its four flippers that were neither quite feet nor fins.

'Did you ever see a creature less able to make up its mind whether to be a four-footed land animal or a fluke-tailed whale?' chuckled Macy.

'His tail flippers are not nearly so like the flukes of a whale as those of seals,' remarked Jonathan examining the dead animal very closely.

Macy threw a quizzical look towards the boy. 'That is very true, lad,' he said, 'and uncommonly observant of you.' He would have been less surprised had he known that Jonathan was in the habit of making careful drawings in his diary of all the creatures he saw on the voyage.

'Look!' cried the man, 'there's another swimming through the water. Listen to his puffing. Hand me a musket, lad, for I do believe he intends to present himself as a target.'

The walrus clambered awkwardly on to the far side of the floe and waddled across the ice. Macy's gun went off and the animal fell dead.

'Now men,' he said, 'set to work and flay these carcasses for the hide will plait us some fine ropes and we'll fill a barrel or two with his blubber.'

The smell of flesh attracted more polar bears and as soon as the walruses were stripped the expedition retreated to the boat and left the bears to devour the remains.

The *Pilgrim* was already under way when the boat returned, for the ice had begun to close in around her. On board the last of the casks were being sent down the hatchway to the hold. Jonathan and Joseph joined in

helping to scrub the decks and were glad of the opportunity to talk with each other after the excitement of the day but Jonathan noticed that his friend's manner was much more subdued than usual and he instinctively associated the change with the dreaded person of Sykes. At once his own only too familiar uneasiness of mind returned and for a while the two friends scrubbed in silence.

Then among the others working at the far end of the deck Jonathan saw Sykes straighten his back from the scrubbing. In the man's eyes there was a furtiveness that betrayed his ill-concealed fear, and when they looked at the boy they were full of utter hate.

Joseph's silence was unusual. He was always so ready to talk and so gay in his manner. It occurred to Jonathan that his friend was concealing something from him.

'Tell me, Joseph,' he murmured softly, 'something has happened, has it not?'

'Yes,' replied Joseph, 'but wait until we can be alone.'

When the scrubbing was finished they went to the ship's bows and pretended to be looking at some dolphins that were frolicking near some floes.

'I know now,' said Joseph, as they leant on the bulwarks, 'what it is that has troubled you for so long. Last night Chimoo awakened me and we stood by your hammock listening to you talking in your sleep. Your words were disjointed but they told Chimoo that which he has long suspected—that Sykes murdered his brother.'

'Chimoo's brother!' cried Jonathan in astonishment.

'Yes, of course. I thought you knew that,' said Joseph.

'I only knew that he was an Indian. Does Sykes know about my talking in my sleep?'

'No, he was on watch and Chimoo and I were the only ones who heard. Chimoo will say nothing to him yet because we heard you mumbling something about Sykes

feeding you to the gulls if you break your vow. It is obvious from Sykes' manner that he is in constant fear that you will tell the Indians; so use great caution, Jonathan, not to reveal anything in your looks and do not be afraid, for Chimoo and I will never be far from your side.'

CHAPTER NINE

# *The Ship Imprisoned*

THE *Pilgrim's* cargo of blubber was now almost complete and many a whaling master would at this point have contented himself with his catch and sailed for home, stopping on the way perhaps to hunt seal and fill the remaining space with pelts; but thrift and thoroughness were the watchwords of this Quaker captain and he was determined that those twenty-odd empty casks that lay in the hold should be filled with blubber before his ship sailed out of the ice. So he pointed her nose eastward and brought her closer than she had yet been to the Greenland shore. Between the bergs and the floes she sailed in bright sparkling sunshine with every man on deck and aloft looking out for the spouts of whale.

Captain Slocum had not long to wait for the words he wanted to hear.

The sharp-eyed Joseph Mather, perched on the crosstrees, bellowed the call to action this time.

'Town ho! She blows, she blows!'

'Where away?' hailed the captain.

'Two points on the starboard bow, sir. About a mile and a half away, but the other side of the ice.'

'Keep thine eyes glued to them, Mather, and I will find a passage through,' called the captain.

He took the ship into the first channel that led through

the vast area of pack ice and brought her to where the whales had been sighted.

'Where are they, Mather, where are the whales thou sawest?' cried the captain, angry at finding nothing there but a few seals clustered on a floe.

'He come to them much too quick,' whispered old Pierre in Jonathan's ear. 'The ship, she frighten the wise old fellows and they dive under the ice.'

'Gone to earth, eh?' said Jonathan, but the phrase was wasted on Pierre.

An hour later there was still no sign of whale and the company had settled down to the workaday chores of ship's routine.

In the small foul-smelling galley Jonathan was cutting up some whalemeat for supper. Pierre was away in another part of the ship and when behind him there came the sound of someone entering the boy thought quite naturally that it was the cook returning; but when he turned he saw, leaning against the closed door, the large figure of Nathaniel Sykes.

Jonathan faced the man squarely enough but his knees suddenly felt very weak.

Sykes broke the silence that followed. 'You've been talking, I know you 'ave.' He still leaned heavily with his back against the door.

'I have not broken my vow of silence if that is your meaning,' replied Jonathan with beating heart.

'That Indian friend of yours knows something,' the deep guttural voice insisted.

'Nothing that I have told him.' Jonathan fought to keep his voice from trembling.

Sykes lurched towards the boy and with the door no longer supporting him he was unsteady on his feet. Jonathan caught the smell of rum.

'You lie,' growled Sykes.

Jonathan felt for the knife that he knew lay upon the

table behind him, but a horny hand gripped him by the collar and pulled him away.

'You told Chimoo. I've seen it in the way 'e looks at me. You broke your promise to old Nat, did you not?'

'No, no!' Jonathan cried.

The grip on his throat tightened. Then through the mist that was covering his eyes he saw the door open behind Sykes. A long brown arm went round the man's neck and the choking sensation in his own throat suddenly ceased. As he collapsed on the deck of the galley he heard as if far away the thud of a man's weight against a bulkhead. His head cleared and the mist passed from his eyes. He sat up and saw in the passage-way outside the tall figure of Chimoo standing with tomahawk in hand over the half-stunned figure of Sykes.

'You plenty bad white man,' the Indian was saying in a deep fierce voice. 'You bring bad liquor to Injun village and many strong braves grow sick and go to meet Injun gods. Then one Injun brave tell bad white man go 'way from village and you bad white man killem.'

At last Jonathan knew why Sykes had committed that foul crime and he listened apprehensively as the Indian continued his condemnation.

'You bad white man afraid Injun tribe know who killed their brave and you sign on *Pilgrim*. You sleep with much liquor inside you and when you wake up you find Chimoo brother of dead Injun and then you more scared. But Chimoo still not sure and wait for more signs. Then Injun god visit white boy in sleep and makem tell Chimoo who kill brother. He say you bad white man, you killem and you kill white boy too if he speak. Chimoo no can take bad man Sykes to shore and fight him like true brave. Injun god say Chimoo kill bad man now!' and Chimoo raised his tomahawk.

Sykes rolled over in an attempt to avoid the blow.

'No, no!' cried Jonathan leaping to his feet, horrified at what was about to happen.

But now Joseph was thrusting himself between the two men and down the companionway came Mr. Macy and several men who had heard the sound of Chimoo's angry voice. They pulled the struggling Indian away from Sykes.

'What in the name of St. Christopher is going on down here?' roared Macy; but before anyone could make a reply there came from above a call from the lookout.

'Town ho! She blows again. She blo-o-o-o-ows!'

'On deck with the lot of you!' roared Macy. 'We'll sort out this affair when we've dealt with those whales.'

With the dazed Sykes bringing up the rear everyone climbed to the upper deck where men were already clambering over the side into the whaleboats. Away to starboard Greenland whales were sending up their white fountains. Even the sober-minded captain was elated at the sight of so many whales.

'Oh, for a ship ten times the size of this cockle-shell!' he cried. 'I would fill her holds with blubber and all our pockets with gold. Away with thee, men, and catch me just one and we'll barely have room for that. Move thy sluggish body, Sykes, and take thy place in the boat or I will send that boy in thy stead. Move, I say. Move man, move!'

As Jonathan watched the boats depart his mind raced with wild conjectures of what would happen now that his secret was out. He shivered in the biting wind which had sprung up during the past few hours. Looking upwards he watched grey clouds racing low and eastwards for the Greenland shore. Ice was bumping the ship's hull as she cruised under shortened sail in the rising sea. Away to windward the ice floes stretched as far as the eye could see.

He watched the boats pick their way to the nearest

whales and saw one of them quickly made fast without delay. It was Todd's boat and seated at one of the oars was Sykes, his quarrels forgotten for the time in the all-absorbing task of hunting the whale.

The whale sounded at once and the line went down at a steep angle so that Todd was forced to let it run freely around the loggerhead.

Soon Todd called out to Macy's boat in which Chimoo was about to cast his harpoon at another whale and Macy came alongside and bent his own whale-line on to the end of Todd's; and not a second too soon. The last of Todd's line whipped out of its tub and now it was Macy's boat which was attached to the whale.

They did not know that a 'gallied' Greenland whale would take as much as eight hundred fathom of line and both crews waited tensely as the second two hundred and fifty fathoms length of hemp rope was taken out of the boat and down into the green depths. But unlike the deep-feeding sperm whale the Greenlander was not fitted to remain long in the enormous pressure of those extreme depths and when to the great relief of the whalemen the line ceased to run o· t it was not very long before Macy's men were hauling in hand over hand.

Over Jonathan's head the wind howled through the rigging as it steadily rose to gale force. Captain Slocum looked anxiously away from the boats to windward. The ice was drifting in more thickly than ever, past the *Pilgrim* which was now almost hove to and towards the boats which pitched and tossed in the choppy sea.

Macy's men were still hauling and nearby Todd's boat waited for the chance to be in at the kill when the whale broke surface. High upon the small bow platform stood Todd himself, lance poised and ready for the climax.

Then to his great surprise Jonathan saw Todd reel backwards. The boat's prow was lifted suddenly from the sea by the vast power of the breaching whale which shot

upwards, head, shoulders and belly clear of the water, carrying the shattered craft upon its snout. Then, as the upward momentum of the monster spent itself, it fell back on to the water with a confusion of splintered timbers, oars and men spilling from it like confetti.

'Cut the line!' shouted Macy. Chimoo's knife went through in one sweep and Macy steered his boat to the rescue of his stricken shipmates.

Then a veil of driving snow shut off the scene from those on the deck of the *Pilgrim*. The captain, concerned now as much for the safety of his ship as for those in the boats, pointed her closer to the wind and edged her away from the ice that was now massing dangerously along the coast under the force of the gale.

For the first time there came to Jonathan the full realisation of the immense responsibilities that rested upon the shoulders of his commander. For a brief second he saw himself upon that poop-deck and the question flashed through his mind of how *he* would behave in such a situation if he were in command.

The snow shower passed and he saw, more distant now, Macy's boat picking Todd's men from a small area of ice-fringed water. Three figures stood separately on the surrounding floes beckoning for help; but the men in the water were in greater danger; for around the whale that remained spouting upon the surface with the harpoon still sticking from its side Jonathan saw the killer whales, attracted by the scent of a stricken prey. At the first attack the whale, his lungs now replenished with air, humped his back, flipped his tail and disappeared. Some of the killers followed in pursuit but a few remained to investigate the strange scent of Man that still lingered in their waters; but by now all the men were safely out of the sea and only the three on the ice awaited rescue.

One was reached without difficulty but floes separated the other two from their would-be rescuers and they tried

again and again to reach the boat by leaping from one floe to another only to find that the ice at the edges, still soft from the warmth of summer, would not support their weight. Then Macy drove his boat's bow into the edge of the ice and one of his men with some difficulty landed on a floe that fringed the pool and with all the weight of the wind to help him cast a line to the nearest of the two men who was soon safely in the boat. Only one man remained and it was not until then that Jonathan recognised the distant figure as that of Sykes.

Again a blanket of snow covered the scene from the five men and the boy watching anxiously on the deck of the *Pilgrim*. When it lifted a little they saw to seaward an endless barrier of white ice lying low upon the sea.

'Larboard thy helm!' the captain ordered.

'Ease her!'

'Steady!'

With her nose to the southward the little ship sailed through an ever-narrowing channel formed on the one hand by the ice that had packed against the shore and on the other by that which was advancing from the westward. To the problem of getting the whaleboat safely back to the ship was now added that of finding a passage through or around the approaching ice to the open sea that could be seen beyond.

As the ship reached southward the whaleboat was once more hidden from their view by the driving snow.

The lane of water narrowed until the ice on either side joined to form a cul-de-sac; The *Pilgrim* wore round and bore away to the northward and her tall captain bade his men come to the poop-deck where he knelt with them and prayed for God's guidance and protection in that difficult hour. As they listened with bowed heads to the words of their captain the boy stole glances at the men around him. His eyes roamed from the erect figure of the helmsman tensely gripping the tiller and peering ahead, to the two

older whalemen and to old Pierre who knelt beside him muttering in French; and then on his other side to the captain whom he had thought nothing could ever humble. He closed his own eyes and the deep chanting tones of the voice beside him became only a background for his own personal prayer.

Suddenly and sharply the helmsman's voice rang out, 'Captain, sir, look!'

They all rose to their feet. In the direction of the helmsman's pointing finger they saw in the distance a great fissure opening in the ice on the landward side and heard the roar of floe crushing against floe.

An area of the vast white desert that reached out from the Greenland shore was swinging independently of the rest, pivoting at some point in the greater distance, and propelled by an unseen natural power of wind or current. On one edge of the ever widening V-shaped gap stood the lone figure of Sykes; on the other, twisting and turning among the tormented floes, the whaleboat was fighting to get into more open water. Then as they watched, the ice on which Sykes stood detached itself quite suddenly from the main mass and bore him slowly towards the centre of the gap. Around him on the same floe three seals lay apparently quite unconcerned.

Captain Slocum pointed his ship in the direction of the stranded man. Macy and his men still strove to free their boat. Even Chimoo, in the bows, was fiercely thrusting at the floes with his oar in helping to get clear. The better qualities of men were rising above their hates and enmities to meet the challenge of the greater forces of nature.

Then, at the edge of the floe on which Sykes stood, a large, black and white shape appeared; it rested there for an instant and its weight tilted the floe at an angle that sent the man sprawling and two of the seals sliding into the sea.

'Those are killers!' cried one of the men in the *Pilgrim* as two more black and white heads emerged from the water and depressed the rim of the floe to send the third seal sliding to a quick death. Sykes sprawled to within a few feet of the edge but recovered his hold as the floe settled back to the horizontal.

The whaleboat had got clear by now and was heading towards him and the *Pilgrim* was entering the wide V-shaped fissure in the ice. As the two converged towards the same point the killers made a mass assault on the floe; it tilted steeply and the man's last cry for help was cut short as he slid into the cold green sea. There was a flurry of black fins cutting the surface and sleek black and white shapes darting through the green spume-flecked sea; then nothing but the floe rising and falling on the long undulating swell remained to mark the spot where the drama had taken place.

'The Lord rest his soul!' murmured the captain but the rest of the men and the boy watching from the *Pilgrim's* deck were too stricken with horror to speak.

In Jonathan horror slowly gave way to an involuntary feeling of relief as he became conscious of a great burden being lifted from his aching soul.

The battered whaleboat limped towards its mother ship.

'Waste no time, Mr. Macy!' hailed the captain as he brought the ship into the wind. 'The ice is closing in fast.'

As Chimoo climbed over the side of the ship he met Jonathan standing with tears rolling down his young cheeks. The big Indian put an arm around the boys' shoulder.

'Bad man finish now,' he said. 'Injun god send him to other hunting ground.'

The drenched, shivering men were helped aboard. In the forecastle a cask of rum was broached at the captain's

command and for a while at least they found comfort in the realisation that they were safe in the ship again.

Soon, however, the word spread that new dangers awaited them and those who had sufficiently recovered climbed to the upper deck again and gazed with dread upon the endless stretch of pack ice that obstructed the ship's escape to the open waters beyond.

In the hope of finding the northern flank of his enemy Captain Slocum now sailed his ship northward through the ever narrowing lane of water; but it soon became evident that here too there was no escape. Once more he found the ice on either hand converging towards an impassable cul-de-sac.

He brought his imprisoned vessel to the centre of the long crescent-shaped pool and tacked her to and fro in the howling gale in the hope that the wind might drop and halt the remorseless advance of the dense barrier of pack ice or that a gap might form that would lead the ship to safety. Once more he bade his men kneel in prayer. When they arose to their feet there was barely sailing room in the narrow pool.

One forlorn hope remained. Giving his ship all the canvas she could carry he put her on a close-hauled tack and drove her into the advancing ice barrier.

A steam vessel of later centuries would in all probability have forced her way through but the *Pilgrim* possessed only the power of her sails. Though her men strove valiantly with spars to push the ice from her path the time came when further progress was impossible.

Locked in the ice she awaited her fate.

CHAPTER TEN

# *The Rescue*

BUT FOR AN unexpectedly early onset of winter in the Davis Straits during that late July the ice that held the *Pilgrim* in its grip might well have dispersed sufficiently for the little whaler to gain the open water; but the falling temperature caused the massed floes to freeze together into a solid area of ice that completely covered the sea as far as the distant Greenland shore to the eastward and for several miles out into the Straits to the westward.

As the days passed the ship's timbers bent inwards under the merciless pressure of ice and all hope of saving her was slowly abandoned.

The blizzard passed and the low sun shone on a desert of dazzling white.

Alongside the brave, shattered little whaler that had now become almost obscured by a mantle of snow the gaunt-faced Quaker captain gathered his men around him.

'My friends,' he began in a voice that was now tinged with humbleness, 'we have ventured beyond the limits that God intended and He has ordained that we shall forsake this ship and all the fruits of our recent labours. We must repair the boat and fit her with sledges,' and turning to the diminutive second mate he said, 'That will be the task of thy watch, Mr. Todd.' Then, addressing

himself to his stalwart first officer, 'And thy watch, Mr. Macy, shall be responsible for the removal of stores from the ship and the loading of them into the whaleboat. Take food, muskets and ammunition and enough sailcloth to make tents. We shall need some whale blubber for fuel and light and also to make smoke signals, and a few casks of rum to keep us warm. With God's help I hope that we shall reach the edge of the ice where it meets the sea. There we should sight the foreign whalers sailing out of the Arctic for it is still July and there should be many not yet returned to Europe. Take courage, my friends, for the good Lord is with us in our trials.'

When, after several hours, the preparations were completed he called them around him once more and bade them kneel in prayer.

Then, refreshed with new spiritual strength they arose and set their faces to the westward to meet the ordeal that they knew awaited them.

Jonathan pulled tight the cord of the canvas bag in

which amongst the few other personal possessions and a quantity of food lay the tattered diary, now more precious to him than ever. It also held the small brass crucifix and the copy of Bunyan's *Country Rimes for Boys and Girls* which he had never found time to read.

He slung the bag over his shoulder and with one last sad look at the doomed ship still flying her tattered New England flag he took his place in the single line of men following in the tracks of the whaleboat which on its improvised sledge runners was already moving off as a dozen men hauled at the two lines that had been attached for that purpose.

By the next day the blue-green line of the sea was well within sight but down from the north moved a line of five huge icebergs which, propelled southward by the currents that flowed under the ice, crashed their way through the white desert like giants breasting the thin covering on a frozen pool.

Unless the expedition could pass ahead of the oncoming

bergs its path to the sea would be cut off by the line of broken ice left in the path of that line of giants.

Fatigued by many hours of arduous travel with little rest and half blinded by the glare of the snow the party increased its pace in a desperate race to the sea.

Snow began to fall and soon the bergs were hidden from their view. Only the direction of the ever increasing roar of crushing ice could now tell them whether their race would be won.

Now the sound was almost directly on their right and so loud that they knew that the next few minutes would decide their fate.

Jonathan and Joseph joined with the others who were not pulling upon the sledge ropes and pushed at the boat with strength that comes only from great fear.

Two men who had become lame with frostbite fell behind the main body of the expedition and as the deafening roar approached its climax two others ran back through the blizzard to help them.

Those ahead toiled onwards ignorant of the fate of their four comrades and not until the noise behind them began to recede into the distance did they stop to rest their weary bodies. It was the boy among them who first noticed that the men were missing. He had been concerned for the failing strength of old Pierre and after he had lain exhausted in the snow for a while he sat up and looked about him. Thinking that the old cook might be one of the many dim shapes in the snow around him he crawled from one recumbent figure to another. He found the captain seated on the snow with his head on his chest.

'Captain, sir,' murmured the boy, 'I think that old Pierre and some others are missing.'

Captain Slocum raised his head wearily and his bloodshot eyes regarded the boy with a certain gentleness of expression that Jonathan had not noticed in his captain before.

'Thank 'ee, lad, I will take a party back to look for them.'

'May I be one, sir?'

'Thou art a brave lad, Oakley, and thou has a sharp eye so fetch thy friends Chimoo and young Mather quickly for I hear another berg approaching.'

The captain led his party back along the tracks that were already almost obliterated by snow till they came to broken ice that the berg had left in its wake and could go no further. Though they shouted into the blizzard and searched left and right they neither heard nor found any sign of their four comrades.

'We can stay no longer,' shouted the captain but his words were drowned by the increasing roar of the next berg and he signalled with his arm for them to leave.

When, many minutes later the search party returned, they found that the boat was already on the move as the sound of fresh danger grew louder.

Onwards through the blizzard again they drove their numbed and frozen bodies, until suddenly the foremost man on one of the hauling lines fell through the ice and the party halted.

The man was hauled to safety but it was at once evident that they were nearing the edge of the ice; so they returned a short distance along their tracks and made camp. Tents were improvised from old sailcloth, snow was melted over a blubber fire to make a warming brew of rum. Jonathan tasted this spirit for the first time and though he hated its taste it sent a welcome glow of warmth through him and helped him to eat the salted beef and dry tack that followed. Then Chimoo, Jonathan and Joseph crawled into the tiny tent that the Indian had erected and with Jonathan in the middle the three fell asleep hugging each other for mutual warmth.

How long he slept Jonathan never knew but he awoke to

the sound of excited voices outside the tent in which he now found himself alone.

He pulled his stiff aching body into the open. A watery sun shone over a world of white and the glare hurt his eyes.

The men were standing round the fire which was sending up a column of black smoke and some were pointing towards the blue stretch of sea that lay only a few hundred yards away.

The boy joined them and found that they were watching a line of ships that were sailing southward in line ahead along the horizon; they were tall square-rigged ships with three masts and high sterns; they were the ships of which the captain had spoken; and they were now the one means of escape from the Arctic for the band of New England whalemen standing on the fringe of the ice.

'Keep that fire going, Mr. Macy,' cried the captain. 'Throw on anything that will make smoke. These may be the last of the ships bound out of the Arctic.'

Slowly the eight ships moved along the horizon and the hearts of the watching whalemen became faint with the fear that their signal would not be seen.

Then the line of ships altered course not directly towards them but in the direction of a group of bergs that floated near the edge of the ice to the southward and on their left hand.

'I would hazard that they have sighted whale around those bergs,' said Macy, 'and if they can see the white spout of a whale there is no reason why they should not see the black spout of our fire. Pile on some more fuel, my chummies, for I'll have a column of smoke that will catch their eyes if I have to give you every piece of cloth I stand in.'

'And I could not be any colder,' said one of the men, 'so you can have mine too,' and he threw his sealskin hat upon the fire.

They watched with anxious eyes as the ships manœuvred through a group of icebergs. Then suddenly from the leading ship came a puff of smoke and in a few seconds they heard the sound of a cannon rumbling through the crisp air.

'They have seen us!' cried one and at once a hoarse cheer went up from the ragged little group.

The commodore of the fleet now bore in their direction followed by three other ships from the line.

Soon boats were seen being lowered from the sterns of the vessels which now lay to the wind while their craft approached the ice.

'Haul away on the boat, lads,' cried Macy, 'for we'll never make the edge of this cursed ice without it. Rope yourselves together in two lines on either side. You Oakley, jump into the boat.'

'With your permission, Mr. Macy. I'll join with the others,' said Jonathan.

'Have it your way, son, but don't let go of the gunwale of that boat because if you fall into this water it'll freeze your blood solid in a few minutes.'

Jonathan roped himself between Joseph and Chimoo and slung his canvas bag into the boat. They pulled the boat over the floes and when they came to gaps between them they launched it, paddled it across still on its sledge runners and hauled it up on to the next one. Never had the lightness of the American whaleboat been so appreciated as it was then by the men of the *Pilgrim*.

They reached the edge of the ice without losing another single man.

As he tumbled into one of the waiting Dutch boats Jonathan heard words spoken in a foreign tongue and felt strong arms enclose him. A beaker touched his lips and a fiery liquid trickled down his throat and set his stomach on fire. His head touched the hard boards on the floor of a boat and then he knew no more.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

# *The Dutch Whalers*

WHEN JONATHAN awoke from the long deep sleep of utter exhaustion he found that he was lying in a hammock under the massive deck beams of a forecastle that was much bigger than the tiny one he had known in the *Pilgrim*. Hearing a familiar voice he peered over the edge of the canvas and recognised with a surge of joy the figures of Joseph and Chimoo silhouetted against the light of a lantern standing on the mess table. He tried to lower himself to the deck but fell back when he found that he could not summon the strength.

At the sound of the boy stirring Joseph arose and came to the side of the hammock. He moved slowly and painfully for his limbs were still stiff and sore from the recent ordeal.

'Hello, Jonathan,' he said, 'how do you feel?'

'A little weak, Joseph, I fear. But what of the rest of the crew? Where are they?'

'They were picked up by boats from other ships. Only Chimoo and ourselves were brought to this vessel.'

Suddenly Jonathan remembered his diary.

'My bag, my canvas bag!' he cried anxiously. 'Where is it?'

'Never fear, Jonathan. When we reached the edge of the ice you took it from the boat and clung to it like a

mother to her child. Here it is on the deck below you; a little wet perhaps, but all there just the same.'

He opened the bag and spread the contents to dry upon the deck.

'Thank you, Joseph,' said Jonathan. 'But tell me about this ship in which we find ourselves.'

'When I have brought you some food I will. You must eat first.'

As Jonathan munched hungrily at salted pork and hard tack Joseph told him about the ship.

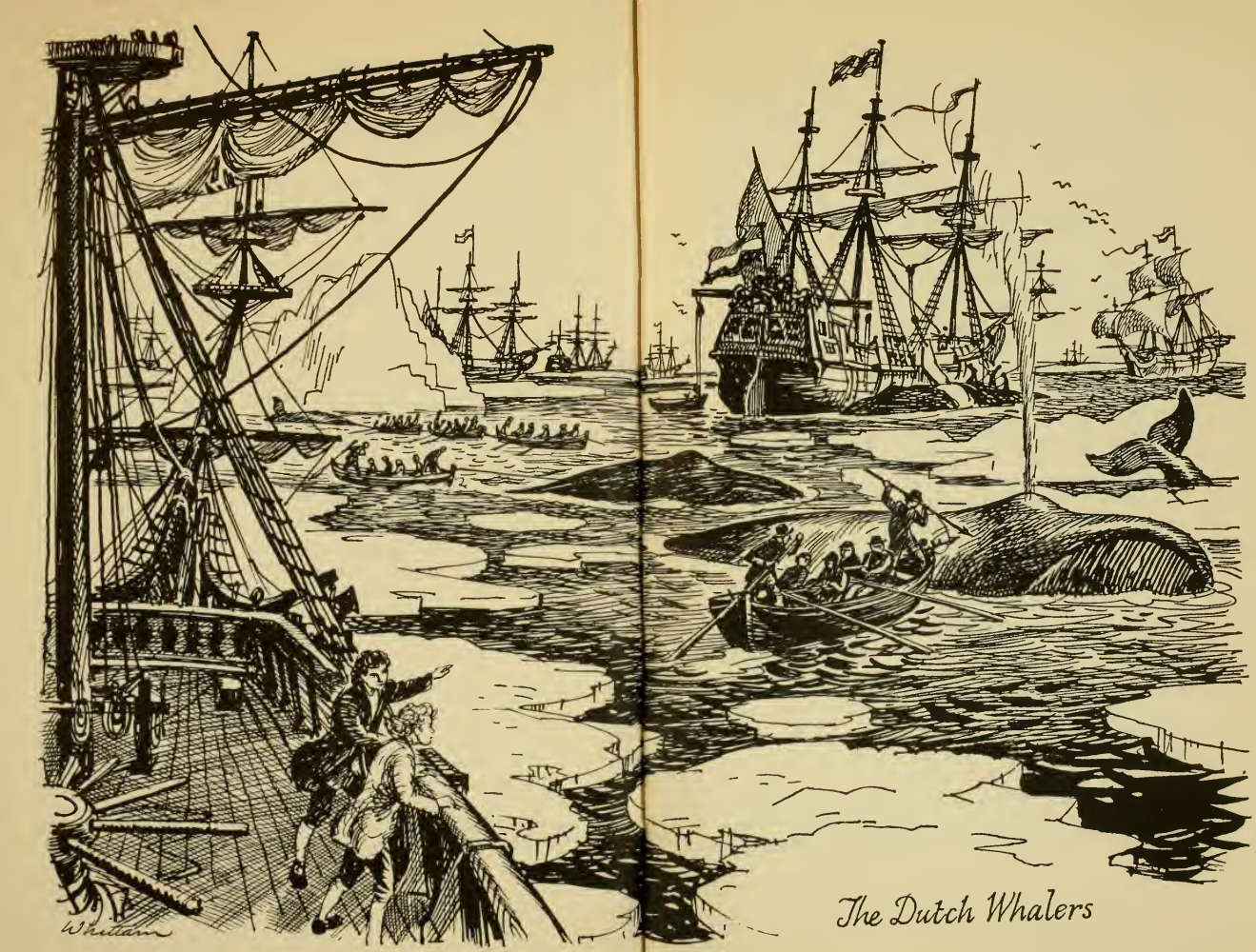
'She is the *Der Browery* of Hoorn and she is one of a fleet of nearly a hundred Dutch whalers working in the Davis Straits this season. She is about four hundred tons and carries at least six whale boats and she has a hold big enough to contain the blubber of many whales. She spends the summer in the Arctic and then returns to Holland to boil the blubber in the try-works there. I have learned this much from one of the crew who speaks English but there are many new things we shall see when we are able to go to the upper deck.'

Joseph climbed with some difficulty into the hammock next to Jonathan's.

'Yes,' said Jonathan. 'I remember poor old Pierre telling me how expert the Dutch whalemen are. But what are the chances of our returning to New England now that we are in a Dutchman?"

'Poor, I fear, seeing that the *Pilgrim* was probably the only American vessel to visit the Arctic this summer,' replied Joseph, 'but perhaps we shall be transferred to one of the English whalers of which I know there are a few hereabouts.'

After another full day's rest Jonathan and Joseph ventured to the spacious upper deck of the *Der Browery*. They looked aloft with wonder at her three tall masts and gazed with awe upon the features of this massive ship against which their beloved little *Pilgrim* would have



*The Dutch Whalers*

seemed but a mere shallop; and all around them the sea and sky was patterned with the shapes of similar vessels whose tall hulls and delicate traceries of masts and rigging stood out in sharp relief against the white and blue background.

The ships of this great fleet all lay to ice-anchors dug into the floes, which, having six-sevenths of their bulk below the sea were very little affected by the force of the winds compared with the ships.

'Look, Jonathan!' cried Joseph. 'That big armed vessel there! She must be the commodore that fired the cannon. She appears more suited to fighting than whaling.'

'Yes, none of the others have gunports,' said Jonathan, and he followed Joseph on an eager inspection of the *Der Browery's* upper deck.

'What can that be?' asked the younger lad pointing to a huge wooden beam that lay horizontally across the poop-deck and jutted out over each quarter.

'Perhaps it is used to hoist and lower the whaleboats,' suggested Joseph. He leant out from the ship's side. 'Yes, there is a large tackle with a hook on the lower block hanging from the end of the beam. And there is a boat moored under the stern with rings in the bow and stern to take the hooks; but I can only see one tackle—no, there is the other in the mizzen rigging.'

Joseph's deductions were, in fact, correct. The large fixed beam or shear as it was called was actually the fore-runner of the cranes or davits that came at a later date in the evolution of whaleships.

'Do you suppose, Joseph, that these Dutchmen chase the whale in that clumsy shallop?' asked Jonathan.

He pointed to the craft under the stern.

The only noticeable feature in common with the American whaleboat was that it was double-ended. With its shorter length, broader beam and heavier construction

it looked indeed a cumbersome craft to manœuvre in a whale hunt. The reason, of course, was that it did not share with the American whaleboat the advantage of having an Indian canoe for an ancestor. The New Englanders might still be only on the threshold of deep-sea whaling but they took with them in their little sloops boats that were much more highly developed for whale hunting than those of the European whalemen.

'It is fitted with gear for hunting,' replied Joseph, 'so I can only assume that it *is* one of their whaleboats, though I find it difficult to believe. Do you notice how the loggerhead is in the bows and not in the stern?'

'Yes, it is just an extension of the stempiece,' replied Jonathan.

Then from across the water there came a new strange call.

'Val! Va-a-a-al!'

The call echoed through the fleet as one ship after another took up the cry.

Only about a half-mile from the *Der Browery* bowheads were shooting their tall crystal fountains into the air.

The Greenland whales were not gregarious creatures but on this occasion as so often happened the yellowish streams of minute sea creatures known as brit on which they fed had drawn them together in search of food. With their wide opened mouths forming caverns each big enough to admit a horse and cart they scooped up many tons of water containing these myriad minute crustacea. Then the great jaws would shut with a snap and the water would be forced from the corners of their mouths by the piston action of their tongues and the tiny sea creatures strained off by the curtains of hair-covered whalebone as if by giant shrimping nets.

Jaws opening, scooping, shutting and all the while from their close-set twin blowholes sending up their single tall spouts, the whales swam down the wind and between

the floes till it seemed they must charge straight into the large floe to which the *Der Browery* was anchored. But the school divided and as they passed on either side of the ship the shallop, now manned by seven blond Dutchmen, pulled away from under the stern and attacked the flank of a big cow whale even whilst her mouth was still wide agape. At the prick of the first iron, snap went the jaws, up went her tail and in a second she had sounded. As if by magic the other fifteen whales disappeared from sight leaving only the squat shallop to hold the stage.

Over her bows the line ran out rapidly and the linesman standing by his loggerhead could only stand and watch it uncoiling first from one and then from the other of the two tubs; but as the speed slowed he took a turn and checked it a little using pads of sailcloth to protect his hands.

On the high poop-deck of the *Der Browery* the Dutch whaling master cupped his hands and shouted orders in the direction of a small berg. Looking in that direction, which was on the opposite beam, the lads saw four shallops in line ahead, attached bow to stern by short ropes. They were towing a dead Greenland whale to the ship but at the captain's order the lines were cast off from the three foremost craft and they joined their comrade whose linesman was now hauling in on the whale line.

The whale surfaced and was soon despatched and brought to the ship's stern where it was moored to await its turn for cutting.

The other whale was brought to the starboard side where a long gap in the bulwarks always remained open during the period of catching whales.

With a speed born of long experience some of the Dutchmen who wore spikes on the heels of their boots climbed on to the whale and removed the tongue and cut out the lips. These alone would be boiled down to a dozen barrels in the try-works at Hoorn. Then the crownpieces

from which hung the two sets of three hundred black whale fins, were cut out in sections and brought on deck. With these preliminaries completed the Dutchmen proceeded with the main task of stripping the blubber. The windlass creaked; the Dutchmen swore; the ship careened as the mainmast felt the fifty-ton weight on its cutting tackle; the blubber slid into the hold and the decks ran with oil and blood. The mates bellowed orders and the flocks of hungry sea-birds quarrelled in plaintive tones. The stripped carcass was released from its chains and sank from sight into the green depths; the next whale was brought to the side, the stage was set and the players repeated their performance.

Sometimes it was a humpback whale that was brought to the ship and then every available boat had to lend its buoyancy to supporting the carcass that might otherwise have sunk. And once it was a twenty-four-foot baby blue whale that had failed to swim away with its mother from danger.

Day after day the hunting, the killing and the stripping continued, the fleet of ships stopping only to spread its sails and move southwards as the season shortened and winter threatened. Somewhere hundreds of miles to the northward lay the little *Pilgrim* that the lads would never see again. And in the harbour town of Sherburne, later known as Nantucket, women wept for sons and husbands who did not return.

CHAPTER TWELVE

# *The English Whalers*

BY THE BEGINNING of August the Dutch whaling fleet had been driven by the advancing ice fringe to the southern tip of Greenland.

As whales became more scarce in those lower latitudes those ships with full cargoes of blubber were ordered by the commodore to proceed to one of the fiords and take on water and then to return to Holland.

A cold north wind was blowing as the *Der Browery* took up her station in the homeward-bound line of ships. Jonathan and Joseph in their white coats made from the fur of polar bears counted nine ships in the line and speculated upon how many of their companions might be making the passage in them.

To the westward they watched a flotilla of heavy German whaleships running under shortened sail before the wind for Cape Farewell. In a few weeks those ships would be discharging their cargoes in the port of Bremen or Hamburg.

The shrill note of a bosun's pipe called the lads to the midday meal and they joined the watch at the long table in the forecastle. Chimoo was there already sipping his

hot soup and keeping a place on either side of him for each of the lads.

As the trio stood by the galley door waiting for the cook to fill their plates with boiled cod they heard the sound of a distant cannon.

'Engelsmen!' muttered one of the Dutchmen and leaving his plate on the mess table he scrambled up the companionway with a dozen others behind him. Jonathan was last to reach the upper deck but he was just in time to to see the splash of a second cannon ball as it fell across the bows of the leading ship which was nosing her way close-hauled into the entrance of a broad ice-free fiord. As the *Der Browery* rounded the protecting headland the Dutch crew swore and waved their clenched fists at two ships which now came into sight. They were fine tall vessels distinguishable from the Dutchmen only by the red ensigns of the English merchant navy that fluttered from their spankers. Along the bulwarks of the nearer of the pair Jonathan recognised the black squares of the gunports that told him that she was armed like the Dutch commodore; and even as he watched there came from her side a spurt of red flame followed by a puff of white smoke and another shot fell across the bows of the Dutch leader. Surely, he thought, England is not at war with the European countries now; he would have been less puzzled if he had known of the jealousies that had so long existed between the whaling fleets of the two countries; jealousies that had started a hundred years ago over the possession of the once famous whaling bays of Spitzbergen.

'Come, Jonathan,' said Joseph, 'let us seek out our English speaking friend and ask him what it is that ails these countrymen of yours.'

They found their interpreter, a short, round, blond-bearded man in his forties who had served in the whale-ships of many countries, sitting on a cask philosophically

smoking a stubby clay pipe as if content to leave any swearing that the occasion demanded to his more demonstrative shipmates.

'It is the Englishman's belief that he has but to show his flag in any part of land or sea to make it at once the possession of King George,' he explained dourly. 'Or perhaps he has sighted a porpoise in the fiord and is afraid we shall steal it from him.' He pointed the stem of his pipe towards the Englishmen. 'The South Sea Company gives them fine enough ships to hunt the whale but they have lost the art of the trade and have left it to we Dutchmen to show the world how to kill whales for profit.'

The sound of bunting flapping in the wind caused him to look aloft at the signal that was being hoisted.

'It seems,' he said, 'that our captain wishes to hand you over to these English ships.'

'Shall we be able to return to New England?' asked Joseph eagerly.

'What port will they take us to?' asked Jonathan, hoping that it might be the Bristol which he knew so well.

'I think that they will go to London,' replied the Dutch sailor. 'There you will be able to find a ship more easily than in the Dutch whaling ports.'

'Shall we meet others from the *Pilgrim* in the English ships?' asked Jonathan.

The Dutchman looked into the boy's serious face under its hood of white fur. 'No, my son, they are in the ships from which we parted company.' He swung his gaze to the English whalers. 'I see the affirmative signal flies on one of the Englishmen so you should prepare yourselves for a change of ships.'

The two lads found their Indian companion and told him the news. Soon the trio stood waiting on the deck, Jonathan with his precious canvas bag resting at his feet. They watched one of the English ships come smartly into the wind and lower a boat which was soon under the

*Der Browery's* lee side. With a final wave to their rescuers the three shipwrecked mariners clambered down the sloping sides into the waiting boat.

Not a word had been spoken between the Dutch and the English but as the boat drew away there came from the deck of the *Der Browery* the sound of derisive laughter which seemed to say, 'Keep your precious fiord, proud Englishmen, for we can find our fresh water elsewhere. Our holds are full of blubber and you are welcome to any whale you may find in the short time you have left before the ice drives you homewards.'

But the young English officer, in his neat coat of sealskin and tricorn hat trimmed with gold, turned his back on the Dutchmen and steered his boat towards the fourteen-gun ship which lay with mainyard hauled aback awaiting its return.

As the boat ran under the ship's stern Jonathan looked up and read the name inscribed in gilt letters on the high transom: *Rose of Kent.*

The captain in whose presence they soon found themselves was a big round man with a merry red face under a white powdered periwig and was dressed so smartly in his coat of blue and gold, white doublet and blue breeches that one might have thought him preparing to step ashore to the South Sea Company's offices in London, at any moment.

After a brief interrogation he concluded jocularly, 'Now off with the three of ye and see that ye earn your salt till we reach London,' and turning to the officer in the sealskin coat who waited by the door, 'Put them to work, Mr. Johnson, as soon as you like.'

Mr. Johnson, the fourth mate, however, was more concerned with the whales that he hoped were being pursued by some of the shallops inside the fiord and giving the trio brief instructions about hammocks and ship's routine he left them to their own devices. After finding

their berths in the forecastle they watched the five whaling shallops sailing down the wind as they returned from an unsuccessful hunt.

'Look there, my chummies,' exclaimed Joseph as one of the shallops dropped her sail and closed under the *Rose's* lee. 'Have you ever seen the like of that in a whaleboat?'

In the bows of the boat was mounted a weapon that looked like a small cannon.

'It must be for firing harpoons,' suggested Jonathan. 'But what a heavy burden for a boat to carry.'

'It seems to be built for the task, though,' said Joseph.

'Him plenty much heavy boat to catchem whale,' grunted Chimoo.

'Heavier than the Dutchman's even,' said Jonathan, 'but the same in other ways.'

An English sailor with a big black beard joined the conversation.

'It's the new toy o' the South Sea Company, maties,' he explained. 'They 'opes to brighten the future of the English whale fishery with it. The 'Olstein 'arpingers don't like it. They won't 'ave nothin 'to do with such trappin's and they say that you can only kill a whale with a 'and 'arpin' iron—and I agree with 'em. Why you couldn't catch a jellyfish in that shallop, let alone a whale.'

The crew of one of the other shallops were climbing up the ship's side. One of them was haranguing the rest in a loud voice that had a pronounced German accent.

'You English have no respect for the cunning of the whale; you charge him like a bull at a gate and then complain when he becomes afraid,' he was saying.

He was the harpooner of the boat, a blond-haired man from the port of Hamburg and one of the many Holsteiners signed by the South Sea Company at a high share of the profits in an effort to re-kindle the charred embers of the once flourishing English whale fishery whose fame had

been almost extinguished in the last few decades by the success of the Dutch and German whalers; to such an extent, in fact, that there were only twenty-two English whalers in the Arctic whaling grounds that year, as against several hundred Dutch and German.

The sailor with the black beard laughed. 'We'll learn in good time, 'Olsteiner, and then your maties'll wish they never let you put foot aboard the Company's decks.'

There was great truth in the lighthearted banter of the English sailor for in later years, when the keen young English whalemen were to find themselves as proficient as their German teachers they were gradually to displace them. With a government bounty to assist it the English whaling industry was to flourish and prosper whilst the Dutch industry in particular was to reach a low financial ebb through wars and the heavy harbour dues imposed by its government. It was to decline once more when the bounty system was abolished. By 1825 the American whalers, whose forefathers had been Indian canoes, shore boats and humble little sloops like the *Pilgrim*, were to attain a prosperity unprecedented in the history of the ancient calling.

The Holsteiner spat towards the harpoon gun in the boat that now lay moored alongside. 'As for that heap of wood and iron you can throw it into the sea for all the good it will bring you,' he growled.

His words were as true as those of the English sailor for this first tentative experiment had already proved a failure and as long as men were to pursue the whale in wooden boats the harpoon gun in all its experimental shapes and sizes was to be continually cast aside to make room for the muscular arm of the harpooner. A craft of the size required to carry such a gun could not be readily manœuvred under sail and oar and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century when a gun invented by a Norwegian named Svend Foyn coincided with the

arrival of steam powered vessels that the practice of casting the harpoon by hand was superseded by that of firing it from a small cannon.

The next day Jonathan and his two companions watched with great interest as the harpoon gun was tried once more but though it could cast the irons a much greater distance its aim was inaccurate and it was left to the hand harpoons to account for the only whale that was killed in several days' hunting.

Then from the north came the rest of the English ships, some heavily armed like the *Rose of Kent.* One of their number had had to be abandoned in the ice and their catch brought the total of the whole fleet to only fourteen whales. Since it needed at least three whales per ship to make an expedition profitable it could hardly be expected that the South Sea Company would be pleased with the results of its venture.

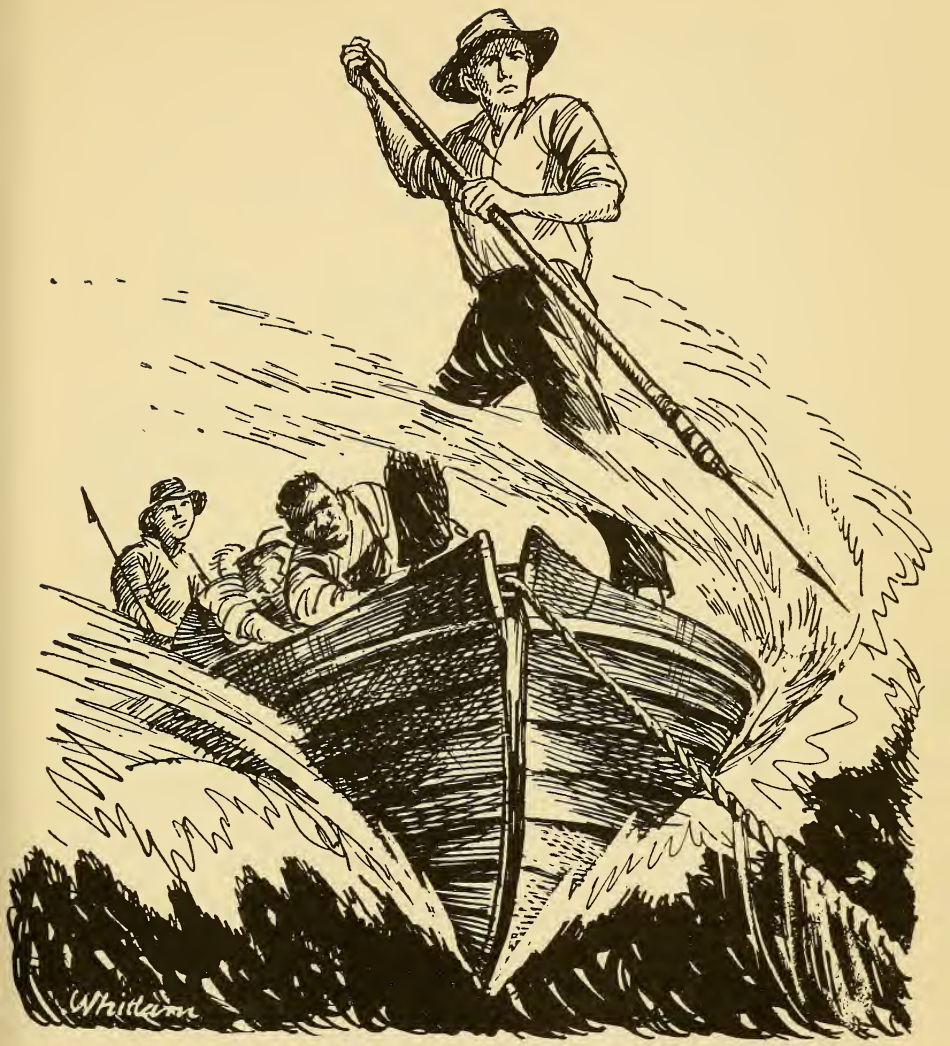
But if the officers were apprehensive about their reception at Deptford there was no depression amongst the men for the Arctic winter was closing its grip on those inhospitable shores and the ships were heading for home.

Their spars white with a coating of ice, the twenty-one vessels fought their way through a blizzard to the southward and after five weeks arrived at Deptford.

* * *

One evening early in September Jonathan stepped once more on to English soil after many months of wandering. With his canvas bag over his shoulder he walked between Joseph and Chimoo over the wet cobbles of the quayside.

A sailor at the *Rose's* gangplank, watching them disappear into the mist of the London river, turned to one of his shipmates and said, 'You know, you couldn't blame those Yankees if they 'ad a bit of a spell ashore, could you?'



# *Part Two: Thomas*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# *The Yankee Whaler*

IN THE YEAR 1848 a sailor, perched in the crowsnest of a smart British merchant packet homeward bound through the Southern Trade Wind belt, sighted a vessel lifting over the northern horizon.

'Sail ho!' he called to his shipmates on the deck below, and clapped his telescope to his eye.

As the distance shortened he recognised the unmistakable features of a whaler; first, the dark specks at the three mastheads which he knew were the lookouts; then the tall white cranes or davits that carried the four whaleboats; and as she loomed larger in the circle of the telescope's vision, the odd-looking hump between the foremast and the mainmast which he knew to be the try-works that all whalers carried on their upper decks.

'She's a blubber-hunter!' he called out to those below.

'They don't build 'em singly in America, they just saws 'em off in lengths,' quipped the bosun loudly and the men laughed as they watched the sturdy squat-hulled vessel of about three hundred and fifty tons hove into view. She was one of over seven hundred whalers to sail from the ports of New England that year.

The merchantman, with the wind behind her, gave way and as she passed under the whaler's lee the lookout

espied the letters on the white-painted bows: *Meribah Nantucket.*

On the poop-deck of the whaler a young, fair-haired man of twenty watched the merchantman as she passed and then returned below to the officers' space in the stern where on his bunk lay several old and tattered leather-bound volumes. They had been given to him by his mother who had discovered them in an old bureau in the house of the Oakleys at Nantucket, and she had expressed the hope that this old journal would provide her son with a means of passing away in a pleasant manner a few of the many thousands of hours of tedium that must be endured during a four-year voyage in search of sperm whale in the Pacific.

He sat on the bunk and as he turned the age-soiled pages of neatly written script he was in his imagination no longer Thomas Oakley, third mate of the Yankee whaler *Meribah*, but Jonathan Oakley, promoted to first mate of a hundred-ton whaling brig sailing in search of bowheads in the northern waters that had been opened to the fleet of New England whalers by the bold but ill-fated little *Pilgrim.*

Thomas had already read during the run down from the Cape Verde Islands of how his ancestor had watched as a boy the longshore whalemen on the Nantucket beaches; of how, after the wreck of the *Pilgrim* and the passage to England, he had returned with Joseph and Chimoo to be greeted by the Mathers in old Nantucket; and of the lad's frequent voyages into the Atlantic in search not only of right whales but also of sperm whales which abounded in the warmer southern waters. He read of Jonathan's pride at striking his first whale which entitled him to wear a toggle badge in his buttonhole; of Jonathan as a fully fledged harpooner, schooled by the faithful Chimoo.

As the *Meribah* reached for the Roaring Forties and the remote island of Tristan da Cunha Thomas found himself

reading Jonathan's diaries at every available spare moment. He read of the pretty girl from Boston who became Mrs. Jonathan Oakley; of Captain Oakley, whaling master and father of five boys and two girls; of Captain Jonathan P. Oakley, shipowner and merchant; and of the old man's visit to his native Somerset in 1805,

the same year that one of his friends made the last entry in an unfamiliar hand stating that 'they buried this fine old man in the Nantucket dunes that he loved so well.'

When Thomas had closed the leather cover of the last volume he climbed into the evening sunlight of the upper deck and as he stood with the breeze rustling his fair hair

he felt himself deeply moved by the thought of this great-great-grandfather of his who had been the founder of the Oakley family of whalemen and shipowners. It was not until twilight covered the sea that he returned to his cabin.

There he took from a locker a thick log-book and opening it at the first page wrote: 'The diary of Thomas Oakley, at the time of commencement third mate of the whaling barque *Meribah* of Nantucket.'

His pen moved slowly over the ruled lines for this Thomas Oakley was not the scholar that Jonathan had been. Generations of Oakleys separated the two and a century of whaling had toughened the breed. Yet in the blue eyes of this stalwart young man you might have seen at times something of the dreamer that had been so marked in Jonathan.

When he put down his pen after half an hour of steady writing in which he told of the *Meribah's* departure from Nantucket, he became, with the quickness that was so typical of him, the man of action once more.

He looked at the large timepiece he carried in the pocket of his reefer. It was time for the night watch to take over and his turn to make a report to the Old Man.

He passed through the cabin in which thrice daily meals were served in two sittings, first to the captain and his mates and then to the harpooners who in rank were somewhat equivalent to petty officers. From here he climbed the ladder to the after deck where Hodge the burly first mate had just taken over the watch. He wondered why Hodge always scowled at him in that manner.

Barefooted and with legs slightly astride to meet the movement of the ship he walked forward under the great billowing sails and between the whaleboats that hung from their massive wooden cranes of davits. He paused when he reached the try-works which lay between the foremast and the mainmast. This construction of bricks

and iron erected incongruously on the wooden deck was only partly disguised by the wooden casing that flanked it. Thomas had read in Jonathan's diary that as early as 1743 an ingenious whaling captain had first conceived the idea of taking his own try-works to sea on the deck of his ship, thereby enabling him to bring back casks filled with oil instead of the less profitable blubber.

From one of the pair of huge coppers that were sunk into the top of this oven Thomas was greeted by the black solemn face of an African negro.

'Dey ain't nobody kin shine a pot like dis ole Sam, Mars Oakley,' he croaked. 'En you kin tell d'Ole Man dat dey is my pride and joy fer de whole voyage.'

Thomas laughed and continued his way forward where the men off watch were seated on and around the windlass smoking their pipes. They were the usual mixture that made up the crews of the Yankee whalers of that time; for this world wandering industry gathered to itself men of all races, colours and creeds; brown men from the island-studded Pacific, jet black men from the coasts of Africa, Portuguese from the Azores, white settlers from the American plains and the youngsters who had been born with harpoons in their fists from the whaling ports of New England and others too numerous to mention.

'I found a weevil in my hard tack, Mr. Oakley,' sang out a youth who Thomas strongly suspected had signed aboard to escape the consequences of his misdemeanours on the American mainland.

'The first of a long line of 'em, Matheson, you'll find,' replied Thomas as he descended the forecastle hatch.

He cast a quick critical eye around this small compartment that housed the twenty-six forecastle hands. Much the same as in Jonathan's day, he thought; bigger but no more space to each man; no wonder that the hands prefer to live on deck as much as possible. The bunks, he

concluded were the only improvement since Jonathan's time when the men slept in hammocks.

He looked into the galley where the old negro cook was humming a hymn as he polished his pans.

'Doan you come in dis yer galley till Ah've finished ma cleaning, Mars Oakley.'

'All right, old Ebony,' said Thomas with a grin. 'Rub away and make 'em shine like new dollars, even though they'll be as black as your old face to-morrow."

He climbed into the cleaner air of the upper deck and made his way aft to the captain's cabin where he knocked and entered.

'All's well, sir,' he reported.

'Good, Oakley,' said the grey-haired man in blue pilot cloth as he looked up from the chart he was studying.

Captain John Galloway was a man of nearly sixty with a face like old weathered oak. He was of Quaker descent but unlike the Quaker captain of the little *Pilgrim* had always tempered his ambitions with shrewd judgement; and unlike Melville's Captain Ahab he was intent not upon some strange metaphysical quest but upon reaching the Pacific whaling grounds, filling his holds with oil and returning home in the shortest possible time, a task which with every fresh voyage he hoped by his own discipline and the Grace of God to accomplish within four years. He shared this aim with the rest of the ship's company for it was the custom in whaling for everyone, from cabin boy to captain, to receive a share of the profits proportionate to his rank.

Thomas had an additional reason for wishing the ship a successful voyage; his father, now retired from active whaling, owned half the shares in her.

'How did your crew shape up in the boat practices yesterday, Oakley?' asked the captain.

'Two of them are as green as cabbages, sir, but they'll

settle down after a windward chase or two. Jameson, the harpooner I chose, is no giant but I must say he harpooned those blackfish as well as the best.'

'I think we all need a fat school o' parmaceti to set us on our mettle, Oakley. In my grandfather's day we'ld have seen plenty in the Atlantic but that day has gone.' His heavy brows lowered in a frown. 'You know, if we go on killing right whales and sperm whales at the rate we do there'll be precious few left for our grandsons unless they build boats fast enough to catch the "razorbacks." ' He gazed at the inverted compass set in the cabin roof and then smacked the palm of one hand with the clenched fist of the other. 'But our job, Oakley, is to kill parmaceti, so off with you and tell Mr. Hodge that I expect to raise Tristan by breakfast.'

Hodge, the first mate, was a man of thwarted ambition. In his younger days he had risen steadily enough through the whaling ranks by reason of his courage and ability in the boats. Fifteen years ago when he had reached the rank of first mate the last rung of the ladder, commanding his own whaler, had seemed within easy reach. But voyage after voyage he had found himself signed as second in command. Those fifteen years of vain hoping had soured his attitude towards the younger men of shorter experience who had attained their own commands or were well on the way to doing so; and he had no less reason to feel grieved against the shipowner class who promoted them over the heads of more experienced men such as himself. Indeed, there was not a task in the whole of the whaling craft at which Hodge was not expert, whether decapitating a whale or pin-pointing the ship's position on the wide expanse of landless oceans.

Then why had those old fogies way back on the Nantucket wharves sent him off for another four years as only second in command?

Hodge was asking himself this question for the

hundredth time as Thomas approached him on the poop deck.

'Mr. Hodge, sir,' said Thomas. 'I'm to report from the captain, that he expects to raise Tristan da Cunha by breakfast to-morrow.

'As if I didn't know that already,' growled Hodge, 'after all the times I've done this doggarned trip.'

Thomas could not suppress his amusement at this reply. The voyage was still too young for him to know Hodge very well and he believed the remark to be made half jokingly.

But the roar that came from Hodge left him in no doubt.

'Take that grin off your face, Oakley. I know your old man practically owns this ship but that doesn't mean you can take liberties with me. You think that you'll step roughshod over others and be lording it on your own poop-deck in a few years, don't you? But you're not there yet, so pick up that bucket and broom and give *this* poop-deck a swab down. Jump to it!'

Hodge's tirade and humiliating order stung Thomas to anger.

'You are wrong, Mr. Hodge. You should know my father as a fair man and for myself I expect no favours.'

'Swab this deck!' shouted Hodge.

Slowly and resentfully Thomas filled the bucket, emptied it upon the spotless deck. As he wielded the broom several of the hands working amidships found it hard to stifle their amusement at the sight of an officer engaged in so menial a task.

It was an incident that was to rankle in Thomas's memory for a long, long time.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# *Across the Indian Ocean*

CAPTAIN GALLOWAY brought his ship to that one place on the precipitous shores of Tristan da Cunha where a landing can be effected. A boat was lowered and he was rowed ashore to return after an hour or so with a cargo of hogs, chicken and vegetables which would provide a welcome relief to the monotony of the salt beef and hard biscuit diet during the passage across the Indian Ocean.

With her boat back on its cranes the *Meribah* squared away from the island and soon found her sails filling with the brave west winds that blow right round the globe in those latitudes known as the Roaring Forties. With her long jibboom climbing and dipping she set her prow to the eastward for Australia.

'Secure and lash everything,' sang out the captain above the howling of the wind through the rigging.

'Hoist the boats high on the cranes!'

As the days passed and the winds rose to gale force one sail after another was taken in until only her reefed topsails and foresails remained; and so with two oilskin-clad men continually wrestling with the wheel to keep her

from broaching to, the brave old ship's passage across the wide Indian Ocean became an endless succession of wild toboggan slides as the twenty-foot seas lifted her stern and sent her racing down their long slopes to the troughs where she wallowed and waited for the next one to uplift her.

Then one day the single lookout swaying in his precarious perch on the main topmast bellowed the call which in better weather would have brought joy to the hearts of everyone.

'Th-e-e-re she bl-o-o-o-ws!'

Thomas, standing his watch on the poop-deck, saw three large sperm whales on the weather quarter. As if mimicking the antics of the hard-pressed ship they slid playfully down the long grey-green slopes and their bushy white spouts rising obliquely from their box-like heads were caught by the following wind and flung ahead of them before dispersing their vapour into the spray-filled atmosphere.

Thomas went to the after hatch. 'She blows, Captain!' he called.

Hodge the first mate was superintending some men overhauling the rigging and heard Thomas's words. 'Goddam you, man, d'you think he'd let you lower in this weather,' he bawled derisively.

'I'ld be willing to try for one,' retorted Thomas.

The captain coming on deck at that moment heard the brief altercation.

'Mr. Hodge is right, Oakley,' he said, 'a boat would never live in this sea and anyway you could never bring a dead whale to the ship's side till it eased—and you might have to wait weeks for that,' but the captain's tone was not one of chastisement and there was something in the look that he shot at Hodge which made Thomas believe he would later say something to the first mate about criticising an officer for making what amounted to a normal and proper report.

That evening Hodge found Thomas making an entry in his diary at the cabin table.

'Making a report to old man Oakley, eh?' he jeered. 'Giving him the lowdown on the officers he employs, eh?'

Thomas did not reply but continued with his difficult task of writing whilst swaying his body against the pitching motion of the ship.

The ship ploughed valiantly onwards and as she drew near to the south-western tip of the Australian continent the wind eased and the sun shone through breaks in the clouds. Reefs were shaken out of the sails and strings of wet clothing fluttered in the rigging.

The harpooners climbed the jibboom to practise their skill on the porpoises that danced under the bows.

'Jamie's gotten himself a big one,' cried the cabin boy as peering over the bows he saw Thomas's harpooner score a hit and watched the sleek black and white sea mammal hauled up and over the side by the men who had taken the harpoon line.

'You's gonna have porpoise steaks for supper to-night, honey,' chuckled old Ebony the cook.

'Jamie!' called Thomas. 'When you've done amusing yourself perhaps you'll give the boat a run over with me.'

'Aye, aye, Mr. Oakley, I'm just coming.'

Jameson came aft with a broad grin on his round red face. Thomas was never quite certain whether he was of

Irish or Scottish descent. The unusual breadth of his body made him look even shorter than his five feet three inches. Against the other three harpooners, one of whom was an African negro several inches over six feet, he looked shorter than ever. Perhaps, thought Thomas as he regarded the squat figure with the long muscular ape-like arms, this Jamie is the new style in harpooners, for after all, it must be much easier to balance a body with such a low centre of gravity than a tall and lanky one.

Together they climbed into the boat and began their inspection.

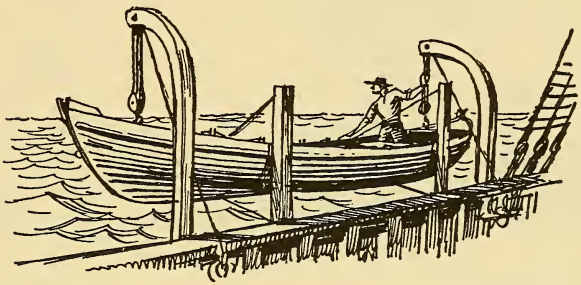
The American whaleboat had reached by now the peak of its perfection. Every plank, timber and nail along its twenty-eight-foot length had evolved to the point where it gave the maximum strength with the minimum weight. There was a brass roller where the whale-line ran out of the bows and, fitted to the gunwale just astern of the bow platform, a plank with a semi-circular section cut out to take the thigh of the harpooner and known as the 'clumsy cleat'. In addition to the five oars and the steering oar there were five paddles lashed to the undersides of the thwarts in readiness for the calm weather occasions when the noises caused by the oars might frighten or 'galley' the whale from the surface. The third means of propulsion was the sail which could be raised by fitting the mast into the hole in the second thwart or lowered and laid flat according to the state of the wind.

So efficient had the American boat proved itself that its design had been adopted by all the European countries then engaged in the whaling industry.

The harpoons and lances rested in their crotches but the whale-line, now of flaxen-coloured manilla instead of the brown hemp of Jonathan's time, was not in the boat. The tub containing its two hundred and twenty fathoms, so meticulously coiled in concentric layers by Jameson,

would not be put into the boat until the moment before lowering, when it would be fitted between the two after thwarts.

'Everything seems to be in good trim, Mr. Oakley,' said Jameson, 'but I'll just give her undersides a polish.'



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# *Sperm Whale*

THOMAS WAS STILL in the boat when from the lookout on the main topmast came the cry that was sheer music to the whaleman's ear.

'There she blo-o-o-ows!'

'Where away?' hailed the captain from the quarter-deck.

'Right ahead, sir. One mile off. A big school of parmaceti.'

As the ship rose on the crest of a sea Thomas saw the unmistakable low spouts of the sperm whales and leapt to the deck.

'Steady as she goes, helmsman,' ordered the captain.

'Lines in the four boats! Stand by to lower!'

The watch below poured from the hatches struggling into their jackets and the fore and mizzen lookouts slid to the deck like monkeys.

'Starboard a little,' said the captain. 'Steady,' and the ship's head moved a point or two so that her boats could be dropped to windward of the school which was swimming with the wind at two or three knots.

'Haul aback the mainyard!' cried the captain and the ship's speed was slowed.

'Lower away! And the good Lord be with you, lads.'

Thomas and Jamie were already in their respective places in the stern and the bow. The boat had barely smacked the crest of a wave before they had the falls unhooked and the other four of the crew were leaping from the ship's side to their places at the oars.

'Pull her clear, lads,' urged Thomas as the ship rolled towards their cedarwood cockleshell.

'Hoist the sail and we'll reach them before they show flukes,' he cried.

He gripped the long vibrating steering oar as the craft planed before the strong following wind down the long slopes of the waves. More than once she became almost unmanageable and when after about ten minutes the whales were only a few hundred yards ahead he gave the order to roll up the sail and use the oars.

Now the boat poised itself in the tumbling white water at the crest of a sea and below him in the trough swam the rearguard of the school.

'Stand up, Jamie,' he thundered and the harpooner shipped his oar, jumped to his feet and stood ready with his harpoon raised as the boat plunged downwards towards its prey. The bow shot past the tail of what Thomas took to be the rearmost whale and as he pressed his chest to his steering oar the boat turned towards the

wallowing brown flank. Jamie's arm flashed twice and two harpoons went deep into the unsuspecting Leviathan. He threw clear from the bows the few coils of 'stray line' and at Thomas's 'Stern all!' the oarsmen backed the boat away from the whale.

The whale arched its hump, threw up its flukes and sounded. The line sped out of the tub, round the loggerhead, between the two banks of oarsmen and over the looms of their oars and out through the fairlead in the bow.

Hodge's boat shot past Thomas's and fastened a harpoon to another of the whales just as they were all diving out of danger; all, that is, with the exception of an old bull, which, in the excitement of the moment, Thomas had failed to notice was following in the wake of the main school. It was not until he felt the steering oar being knocked from his grasp that he saw the wrinkled head of the big fellow in the act of sounding under his boat's stern. For a second the broad tail-flukes cast their shadow over the boat; then as they entered the sea the tip of the nearest one touched the boat—only the tip—but it was enough to put the craft on her beam ends. Two of the midships oarsmen were thrown into the sea and when the boat righted herself she was a quarter full of water and the starboard gunwale was smashed.

The whale-line was still being taken down by the harpooned whale and Thomas dare not check too severely round the loggerhead for fear of having the bows pulled under. He reached out and helped one of the men from the water. The other, alas was not to be seen.

'Bale with anything you can find,' he yelled, 'and keep clear of the snags in the line,' for the neat coils of the whale-line had been thrown askew in their tub by the water that had entered it, and he knew of many cases in which a fouled line had caught a man by a limb and whipped him out over the bows.

With only a few coils still left to run out Thomas

called to the one boat not yet attached to a whale and Hamm, the lanky fourth mate, brought his craft alongside. Thomas's tub oarsman had just taken the other boat's line and was about to bend it on to the eye splice which hung over the edge of the tub ready for such an emergency when the outgoing speed of the line slackened. Thomas took it in his hands and there was almost no pull on it.

'The whale's rising! Haul in!' he cried, and hand over hand the five of them pulled the line back into the boat.

*Thomas probed his lance into the whale's "life"*

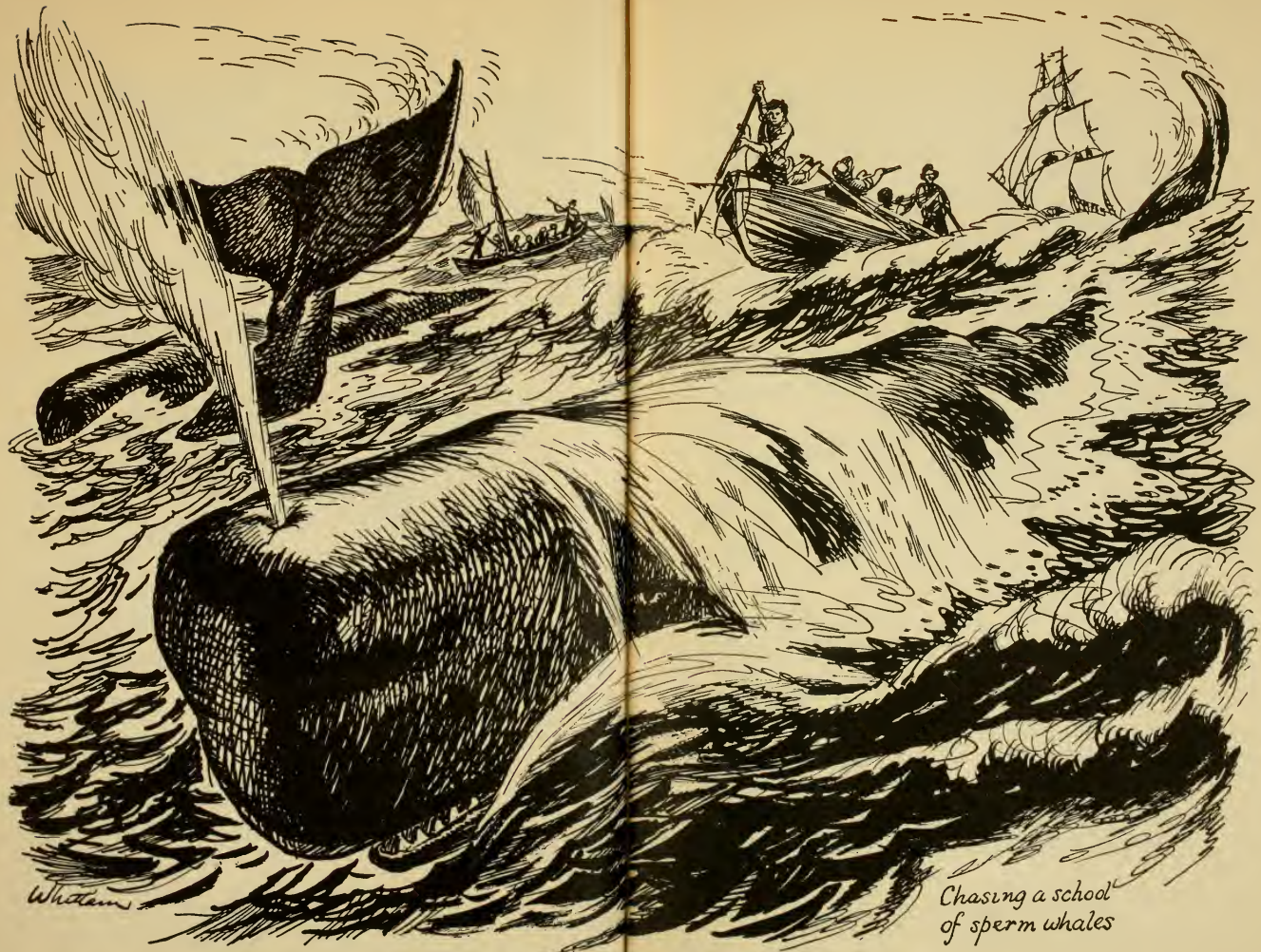
Swish! The whale shot from the water a hundred yards away. His huge body hung for a split second in the air with water streaming from it and then with a resounding smack it fell back on its side sending up fountains of spray.

'Haul up to her!' cried Thomas as he and Jamie quickly changed places.

He took up his lance and stood ready in the bows.

'Oars!' he ordered, and the men rowed the boat over the last few yards till they felt the bows touch the whale.

Thomas probed his lance into the whale's 'life' till he saw the red blood gush from its spout hole.




*Chasing a school of sperm whales*

'Stern all!' he shouted and the boat, having been brought to the lee side for this very purpose, was easily backed away from the whale which now fought with all the fury of its waning life to smash its tormentors with its tail and its snapping jaws.

Hamm's boat riding nearby had reached the whale too late, despite the efforts of his oarsmen, to be in at the kill.

The *Meribah* came alongside the whale and its tail was secured with a heavy chain to her starboard bow.

Thomas's battered boat was hoisted on to the deck for repairs and he and his crew went below to change their soaked clothes.

When he went on deck again the first and second mates, Hodge and Jacobs, were steering their boats into the *Meribah's* lee.

'We lost two lines, Cap'n,' reported Hodge disconsolately as he came over the side. 'He took mine first and then Jacob's and the rate he was diving I reckon he'ld have taken a third.'

'Never mind, Hodge,' said the captain, 'the ship has one whale to her credit and we'll commence cutting as soon as the hands have had dinner.'

* * *

And whilst the men of the *Meribah* are enjoying a well earned meal let the reader enlighten himself if he so wishes on some of the peculiarities of the type of whale which wallows in the shark infested sea under the ship's side.

The spermaceti whale is called the sperm whale for short. In the American whalemen's vocabulary it was often called the 'parmaceti' and the English, borrowing from the French, named it cachalot. Whereas there are several large varieties of the baleen or whalebone whales, the sperm whale is the only large member of the toothed family. The male sperm whale is bigger than its wives

and grows to a maximum of sixty feet, but in the baleen family it is the females that are the larger of the two sexes, sometimes reaching a length of over a hundred feet. The sperm whale does not feed on the myriad minute creatures that live on the surface of the sea but upon the giant cuttlefish which it can only reach by diving to the ocean bed and which it first has to fight and kill. There are many reports of torn and crooked jaws found in sperm whales and it is fairly certain that these injuries were acquired during their struggles with their prey. For this task nature has equipped the sperm whale with a row of sharp teeth set on either side of its sword-shaped lower jaw and each tooth, which can weigh up to four pounds in weight, fits, when the mouth is closed, into a socket in the upper jaw which has only a few small vestigial teeth. Whereas the two close-set nostrils or blowholes of the baleen whales are set well back on the top of the head the sperm whale's are set nearer the fore part of the head and only the left one is active. The females with their young wander in schools like herds of cattle from one feeding ground to another and the polygamous males battle with one another for mastery of the schools, the defeated bulls often retiring to the polar regions; and although the schools are found in the colder seas too it is the tropical and sub-tropical regions that they prefer most.

This whale obtains its name from the unique spermaceti oil which can be extracted in liquid form from a large reservoir in its head. Before the days of electricity this oil fetched a higher price than any other whale-oil by reason of its fine quality and the bright smokeless light that it gave. To-day one of its uses is the lubrication of fine machinery such as typewriters and sewing machines.

Its function in the whale's body is believed to be the hydrostatic control of the breathing tubes when the head is subjected to the enormous pressure on the ocean beds.

The eyes set on each side of the head are no bigger than

those of a cow; and you might search diligently and never find the pinprick holes through which it seems miraculously to be able to hear the splash of an oar a mile away.

Sometimes the whalemen found in the stomach of a sick sperm whale a substance known as ambergris which seemed to form itself around the undigested beak of a cuttlefish. It possessed the singular quality of being able to retain the scent of highly volatile perfumes and perfume manufacturers paid many pounds for a single ounce of it.

The sperm whale now lashed to the *Meribah* was a female and its fourteen-inch thick blubber would yield about fifty barrels of oil which although of lower quality than the spermaceti oil contained in the head would also be used for lighting purposes.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# *'Cutting in' and 'Trying out'*

AFTER A HURRIED MEAL Hodge and Thomas, armed with long-handled cutting spades, climbed on to the staging that had been rigged on the ship's side to overhang the whale and for the time being the differences between the two men were overshadowed by the important task of 'cutting in'.

While Hodge decapitated the whale by cutting away the flesh and severing the backbone where it entered the skull Thomas made a broad semicircular incision in the coat of blubber near the side fin; and within this arc he cut out a hole big enough to receive the fluke of the big iron blubber hook.

The head, which occupied about a third of the whale's length, was hoisted by means of tackles on to the deck where it would eventually be opened at the top by a harpooner and the precious spermaceti oil baled from the case. So pure was this oil that it was poured straight into the casks and required no further treatment.

The long lower jaw would be unhinged and the teeth would provide ivory for the men to carve into the decorative forms known as 'scrimshaw' work during the long

idle days when whales did not present themselves to provide more exciting activity.

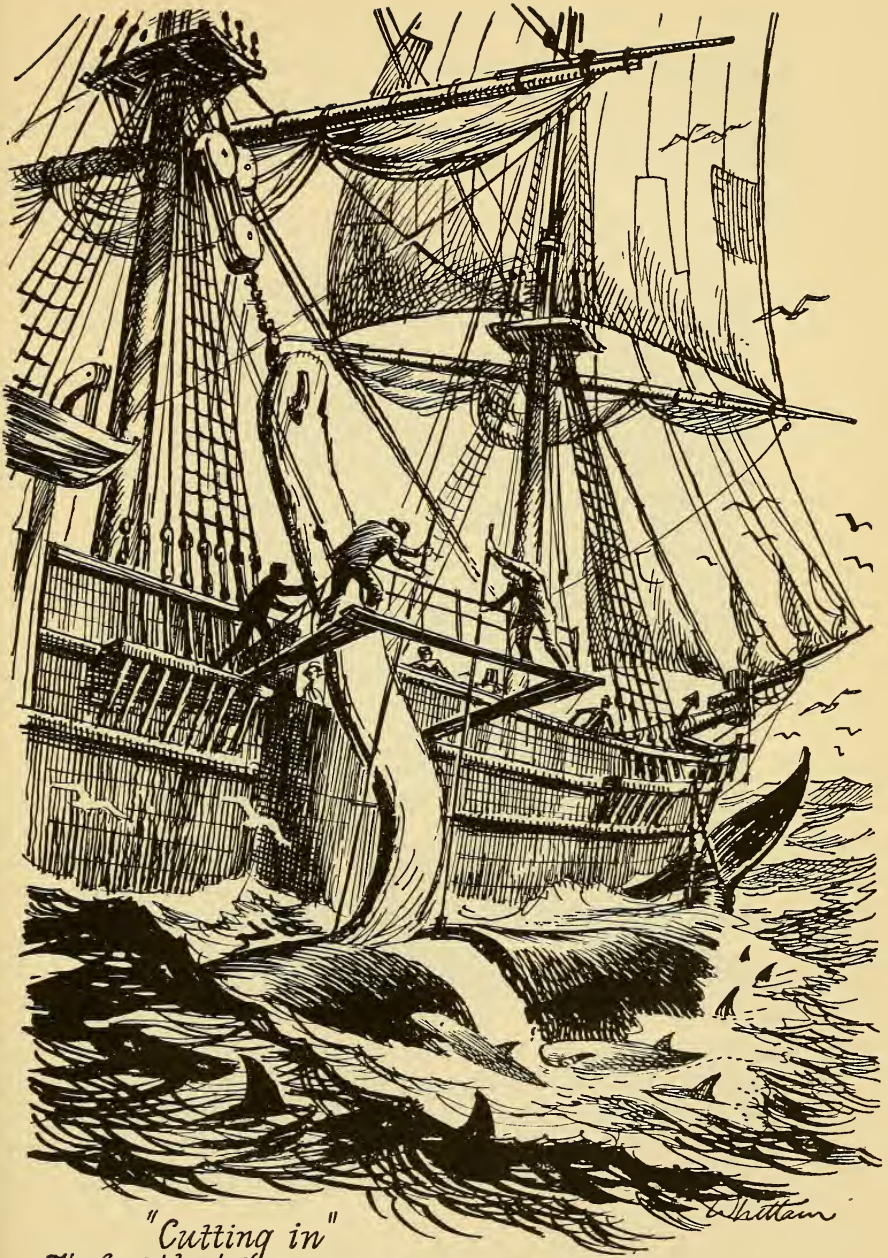
But the head had to wait till the body was stripped. So down came the lower block of one of the two large cutting tackles that always hung ready like a bunch of grapes in the maintop and on to it was shackled the big blubber hook.

And now Jamie fastened the canvas belt of the 'monkey rope' around his middle and leapt down on to the whale. It was the duty of another harpooner on the deck above him to hold the other end of this rope and to prevent Jamie accidentally offering himself as a second course to the dozens of sharks which were gorging upon the whale's carcass.

Another rope was fastened to the blubber hook and its free end was passed down to Jamie who, steadying himself as well as he could upon the slippery, heaving surface, began to haul towards him the several hundredweights of hook and tackle.

He wrestled with this swaying mass until he had got the fluke of the blubber hook into the hole that Thomas had cut. Then, leaping back to the ship, he called out, 'Hook fast. Haul away!' and the men at the windlass began cranking and the three-fold tackle tautened till the mast to which its upper end was attached felt the weight and leaned towards its burden. There was a sudden snap as the semicircular section of blubber was rent from the whale and the ship rolled back to the upright position. At the same time the two mates on the staging extended the two ends of the semicircular cut with their spades and so commenced the continuous strip that would be peeled in spiral fashion from the whale. With a helping hand from the heaving swell the tackle tugged at the blubber and the mates cut it away whilst all the time the whale rolled with each fresh pull.

Now the two blocks of the tackle met high above and the



"Cutting in"
The first blanket piece coming up.

dripping strip reached from the whale right up to the maintop. Jamie, armed with a broad-bladed sword, stepped up and hacked a hole in that portion which was level with his arm and the second hook and tackle was made fast.

'Stand back!' cried Jamie and with a few sweeps of his

*Jamie hauling the blubber-hook.*

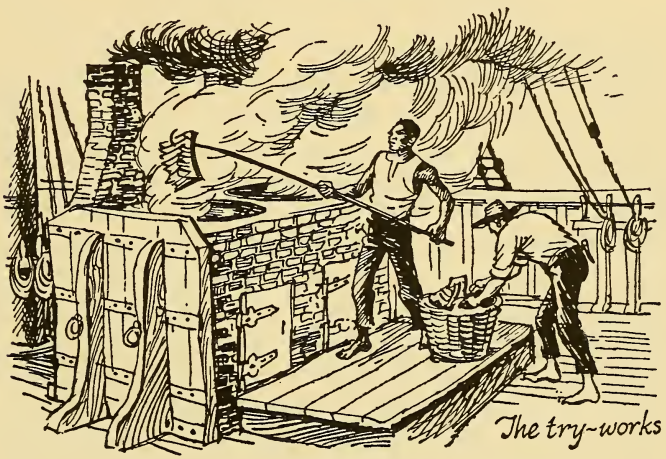
sword severed the blubber in twain so that the upper portion, the first 'blanket piece,' swung free on the one tackle whilst leaving the next piece to be hoisted by the other.

As each 'blanket piece' was cut it was lowered through a

hatch to the blubber room to be cut into the smaller 'horse pieces'; and these in turn were sent up to the deck in tubs to be chopped into even smaller pieces by the man known as the mincer who worked at a wooden bench.

The try-works were already belching wood smoke and the two try-pots now received the minced blubber.

When the last of the blubber had been removed the captain ordered that the whale be cast off. As the



The try-works

chains were slipped from its tail Thomas watched the white carcass, now relieved of its buoyant covering, sink into the depths like a disappearing ghost. It was pursued to the last by the insatiable sharks.

Spreading her sails the *Meribah* departed from the scene of the slaughter and pointed her prow once more to Australia.

All through the night the try-works blazed and the stench of burning flesh fouled the air as the fires were fed with the fritters of the boiled whale blubber.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

# *Into the Pacific*

'LAND HO!'

Hearts and minds grown tired by months of monotonous voyaging thrilled anew at the welcome cry. The south-western tip of Australia was coming up over the eastern horizon and the stormy Indian Ocean was astern.

That evening, with the *Meribah* lying peacefully at anchor on the calm waters of Two People Bay, Thomas took a boatload of men to a white beach that was composed of the powdered bones of a million cuttlefish. Whilst the men stretched their legs he discovered the spring where the captain had said they could find fresh water. Then knowing that this bay was frequently visited by whalers he looked for signs of their visits to this desolate beach; but not a single old cask nor a strand of rope could he find. As he walked back to the boat the reason became only too obvious for the eyes of two black aborigines were peering inquisitively from the trees. He was glad that he had left an armed guard to watch the boat.

On returning to the ship he reported having found the spring to Captain Galloway and then under the shade of a whaleboat he commenced to record his visit in his diary.

Hodge's suspicions flared up as soon as he saw that

Thomas was writing. 'Have you nothing to do but scribble more reports?' he growled.

His tone and manner were so offensive that Thomas leapt to his feet and gave free vent to the anger he had so long repressed.

'What I do with my spare time is my own concern and I'll not seek your permission to write or do anything else that amuses me. As for *what* I am writing you can believe whatever your darn-fool nature tells you and go to the devil.'

Hodge's arm flashed and the back of his hand hit Thomas on the mouth. Recovering, Thomas lunged at his senior officer with clenched fist but before he could strike he felt his legs swept from under him by someone from behind.

'Tom, you fool, stern all!' cried his second attacker as the two fell locked together to the deck and it was not until Thomas saw that it was his friend Hamm, the fourth mate, that he ceased his struggling.

'Thanks, Hamm,' he breathed as he rose to his feet. 'You're right and you probably saved me from spending the rest of the voyage as a fo'castle hand.'

But the shrewd Hamm was not satisfied until he had coaxed Thomas well away from the first mate.

The second day in this bay was spent in taking on water from the spring. The full casks were rolled down the beach and lashed together into the form of a raft which was floated out to the anchored ship.

When the task was finished Thomas removed his clothes and swam naked in the sea. The sight caused great surprise among the company for fishermen and whalemen have always been notoriously poor swimmers preferring, if fate should offer them a watery grave, to enter it with the least delay.

Refreshed by four days' rest, the men sang as they weighed anchor and unfurled the sails. Soon the

*Meribah's* dolphin striker was dipping again to the swell of the open sea and the brave winds of the Roaring Forties were driving her with a bone in her teeth across the Great Australian Bight. Within a week she was passing through the Bass Straits into the Tasman Sea.

Between Tasmania and New Zealand the watchful eyes aloft espied the prey once more and the boats were lowered to give chase. With two more black silhouettes of sperm whales in the margin of her logbook to mark the kill for the day the ship put her head again towards Cape Reingo on the northern tip of New Zealand.

In the beautiful tree-fringed Bay of Islands, famed as a port of call for whaleships, she anchored again and took on fresh fruit, vegetables, hogs and wood for her cooking and trying-out fires. The men were granted a day's liberty to enjoy themselves ashore at the inn where mine host was the typical bluff Englishman.

Thomas and Hamm were entertained by an English farmer and his family and late that night as they found their way back to the landing stage they overtook a strange procession of men from the *Meribah.* They had all supped too well of the local vintages and those who had completely succumbed to its potency were being wheeled along in borrowed wheelbarrows. The merry mariners pushing the barrows were not finding it very easy to keep to the rough roadway and two of them were only too ready to hand over their duties to the two officers.

'She's all yours, Mr. Oakley,' sang out one of the men, 'course nor'-east by east and watch 'er, sir, 'cos she's rolling like a barrel.'

'Aye aye, cap'n,' laughed Thomas and pushed the barrow towards a narrow bridge where in the moonlight he could see that one of the noisy procession was finding some difficulty in making the crossing. Suddenly the man's barrow crashed through the rickety wooden rails and a moment later its occupant, roused from his slumbers

by the cold douche, was sitting waist deep in the shallow stream singing the opening lines of Stephen Foster's sentimental song 'Open thy lattice, love.'

'Split my topsails!' cried Thomas, recognizing the deep bass voice, 'if it isn't old Jamie. Haul him ashore, lads, before he founders.'

It was two hours later that Thomas and Hamm got the last of the liberty men safely on board ship.

At first light all hands were called, the anchor was weighed and sail was set.

Then seven months out from Nantucket and the preliminaries, as it were, completed, the ship felt her way through the silver light of a February dawn out into the Pacific where her true objective lay.

For her company it was the commencement of three long years of cruising from one whaling ground to another according to the seasonal movements of the sperm whale; three years of burning sun and sudden tropical storm; of constant dangers from hidden reefs in poorly charted seas; from hostile natives whose greatest delight was to massacre a crew and plunder the ship; from sickness and disease that awaited them on the island shores; from the dreaded scurvy that knocked the men down like skittles when their diet was deficient in fresh fruit and vegetables; and with every new chase after the prey the danger of a boat stove in or men drowned by an enraged sperm whale which, unlike the right whale, was armed at *both* ends. Three years of fighting the boredom and 'whale sickness' that descended upon men during the long weeks when, as often happened, no spouts could be sighted; three years in which to fill the hold with oil and even then another six months to cross the ten thousand miles to home. It is no wonder that these men referred to a whaling voyage of a mere few months as a 'plum-puddin'er'.

During daylight the ship cruised over the grounds with the eyes of her three lookouts sweeping a ten-mile wide

strip of ocean but at night the ship was brought to the wind and the canvas that had not been furled was so arranged that she remained stationary. For Thomas and his fellow officers night was the time to sleep whilst a harpooner and a few men kept watch on the poop-deck; for upon the alertness and cool judgement of the mates depended the conduct of the chase and the killing of the whales during the hours of daylight. At every dawn the systematic search of thousands of square miles was resumed and the endless routine of cruising, sighting, chasing and killing the whale, cutting and boiling, sleeping and eating, coming on and going off watch was relieved only by an occasional visit to an island and by any hobbies which these men found to their liking. One of the whaleman's favourite spare-time occupations was 'scrimshawing', which was their term for carving into decorative shapes the teeth of the sperm whale.

Thomas's diary became *his* hobby. He described in detail all the islands that the *Meribah* visited; he wrote of the luxuriantly vegetated archipelago of the Fijis; of the friendliness of the people of the Tonga Islands; of the breath-taking loveliness of Honolulu in the Hawaii islands where every March a huge fleet of whaleships made their final preparations to spend the summer in the colder waters of the Okhotsk Sea and the Bering Straits which were now the only grounds in which the bowhead had not been almost exterminated. He told the story of how the *Meribah* repulsed an attack by fifty canoes manned by the bloodthirsty natives of the Gilbert Islands. For Thomas, as it had been for his ancestor Jonathan, sea travel was a constant source of joy and not of boredom as it was to Hodge the first mate.

This rough-grained officer did not abandon his prejudice towards Thomas even when the lean and solemn-faced Hamm sought to mend the breach between the two men by assuring Hodge that Thomas was not making

reports to old Mr. Oakley but keeping a diary. Hodge's suspicions of the third mate's motives for writing, however, were a superficial matter compared to his jealousy of the younger man's ability and blithe, friendly and adventurous nature.

But the time was to come when the differences between the two men were to be put to the real test.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

# *Stove Boats and Dead Whales*

THE *Meribah* had been in the Pacific just over two years and had cruised along the Equator to the arid volcanic Galapagos Islands. Entering Post Office Bay in Charles Island to post letters home in the barrel that had been erected for that purpose on the beach she had found at anchor the *Joseph P. Hart*, a Yankee whaler homeward bound from hunting bowheads in the Bering Straits. The right whaler had taken the *Meribah's* letters and stayed for an evening's "gam".

The right whalemen had spoken of bowheads in which they had found the harpoons of ships known to have been in Greenland waters years before and of their belief that those whales must have travelled the ice-bound passage north of the American continent. Late into the tropical night there had been talk of ships met, of boats stove and of the New England men who had found their graves in the blue waters of the Pacific and the green cold waters of the northern seas.

Then at dawn the two ships had sailed away together each dipping her ensign in a final farewell as she went her separate way.

Now with the last volcanic peak dipping below the horizon astern the *Meribah* commenced her return cruise westwards along the Line.

The deck bore ample evidence of the recent visit in the form of several giant Galapagos tortoises munching at the leaves of cactus. Fresh meat and tasty soups were ensured for another few weeks.

The wind that had borne the ship away from the islands failed and the broad spread of canvas hung limply overhead. Suddenly the lethargic atmosphere was pierced by the sharp call from aloft.

'There she blo-o-ows! There, there, the-e-re!'

In a few minutes four crews of sweating oarsmen were pulling over the glassy sea in a broad line towards a large

school of sperm whale four miles to the southward. Flying fish shot from under the boat's bows and skimmed over the water.

With still two miles to go Hodge made a silent signal that all boats should ship oars and use paddles. Native fashion the crews sat along the gunwales and the rhythmic dipping of their paddles sent the boats gliding noiselessly towards the prey. A single tap of wood on wood could 'galley' the whales and stampede them like cattle. The boats still had a mile to go when the whales showed their flukes and went down; and now each mate was left to manœuvre his boat to the best of his judgement.

Thomas, whose boat was on the left flank, was sure that

the whales had not been 'gallied' by the casual manner in which they had sounded. 'They have gone down to feed,' he thought, 'and it will be at least a half-hour before they rise again—if Hodge and Jacobs do not scare them.' The other boats could go paddling over the whales if they wanted but he was not going to risk 'galleying' them. If they did take fright and flee, however, he knew from long experience that it would be in the direction from which the wind had last come. So he would move to the south-eastward and be ready to intercept them.

He pulled the steering oar towards him a little and the boat's head swung to larboard. 'Slowly, now, men. Softly,' he whispered and the paddles merely kissed the water.

He saw that Hamm was following his example but that Hodge and Jacobs were still forging ahead on the same course.

'Easy all,' and he brought his boat to a stop. Standing now upon the stern platform he waited.

Thirty minutes, thirty-five, and then in the same position as before the first hump broke the surface and a white spout shot into the air.

'They are still quiet, men,' whispered Thomas, as he saw more whales rising. 'Give way with the paddles.'

With Hamm close astern and Hodge and Jacobs about two miles away beyond the school he closed to make his attack.

'Stand up, Jamie,' he ordered and the harpooner shipped his paddle and stood ready.

Then in one of the four boats someone whose nerves were not perhaps so steady as usual must have touched the hull with his paddle; for, led by a huge hundred barrel bull, the whole school suddenly set off along the surface at about ten knots, which was three times their normal cruising speed. Their direction, as Thomas had expected, was to the south-eastward and they were coming straight towards his boat and Hamm's.

*He quickly ascertained the general state of the hunt*

'We'll go for the big bull at the front, Jamie, and take him by the head,' said Thomas in a voice that was only just audible. 'Just a few silent strokes, men, to keep us between his eyes.'

Now the sperm whale has its small eyes set in the sides of its broad head and is unable to see right ahead any more than it is able to see right astern; and it was probable that this big bull leading his family of wives and children away from the noise that it had heard was quite unaware of the boat that waited in its path.

Hamm's boat, however, had taken up a similar position in front of one of the smaller female whales grouped on either quarter of their leader and the old bull must have seen this craft as it came within the vision of his left eye, for he suddenly swerved a little to the right.

'Give way together,' cried Thomas and the paddles bit the water shooting the craft towards the oncoming whale. Jamie's two barbed harpoons flew through the air in quick succession and sank into the big fellow's back. He sounded at once and the whale-line hummed as it flew out of the bow. Thomas checked the line and the friction became so great that smoke rose from the loggerhead.

'Wet the line!' cried Thomas and the nearest man plunged his cap into the sea and dashed water over the loggerhead and into the tub.

Glancing round he quickly ascertained the general state of the hunt. Hamm's boat had fastened to the female whale which had not adopted the usual tactics of sounding but was taking the craft on a 'Nantucket sleigh-ride' at great speed over the sea. Hodge's boat had caught up with the stragglers of the school and the burly first mate was standing on the bow platform throwing his lance in the manner known as 'pitchpolling'. Unable to bring his boat within harpoon range of the fast swimming whales he had taken the harpooner's place in the bow and

with a line attached to his barbless lance was successively casting it at the rearmost whale and retrieving it into his hands. Jacob's boat had still not made contact. One by one the cachalots were sounding but Thomas knew that they must be winded after their fast swim and would soon be up again to blow and fill their lungs. All this he observed in the few seconds that he took his eyes from the whale-line.

'Haul in, haul in!' he called as he felt the line slacken in his hand; and he ran along the thwarts to take up his position for lancing in the bows, while Jamie took his place in the stern (hence the harpooner's alternative name of 'boatsteerer' and the mate's of 'boatheader').

Then directly below him in the blue depths Thomas saw something large and white rising quickly to the surface. It was the inside of the bull whale's wide open mouth.

'Vast hauling and stern all!' he shouted.

Before his crew could execute the order the whale's lower jaw, rising uppermost as the monster rolled on its back, grated the boat's midships planks on one side whilst the bulky upper jaw appeared from the water on the other.

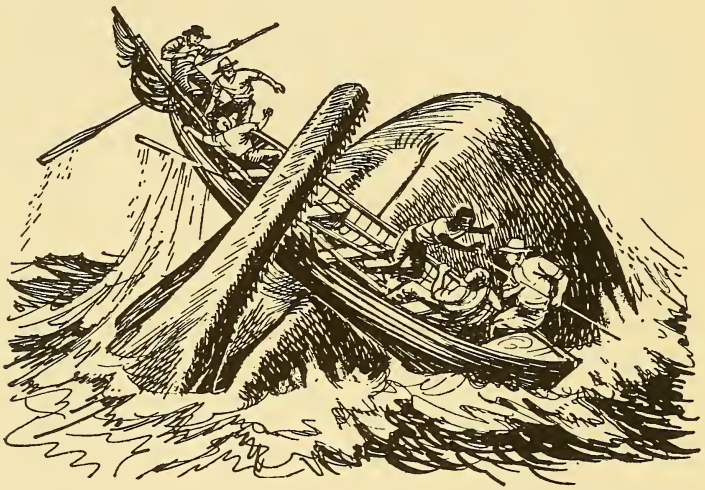
The boat, held in the whale's mouth, was lifted clean out of the water and the men scrambled to the bow and stern. Then the jaws closed with a snap and the craft fell back into the water in two shattered halves.

Thomas came to the surface unhurt among a mass of splintered wreckage. He saw Jamie and two others clinging to the severed stern and caught the collar of Sam his negro oarsman as he was about to bid farewell to the whaling life. Alas, the little Portuguese who manned the second oar had already done so, for the only sign of him was his straw hat floating sadly nearby. The whale-line had apparently escaped being broken, for the bow half of the boat had been towed under by the whale. Even as he made this last observation Thomas saw the

bow rise to the surface a hundred yards away and knew that the manilla line had at last parted under the strain.

He bore his half-drowned comrade to the submerged stern and Jamie gave him a hand to keep the negro afloat.

Then hearing shouts he raised his head and saw a boat hauling up to a whale that had just surfaced nearby. Hodge had at last got near enough to sink a harpoon into his whale and was standing in the bows with his lance



ready. With only a few yards to go the whale suddenly began rolling and like a huge spindle wound the line around its body and jerked it from the men's grasp. Somewhere in the boat a coil must have fouled; perhaps it caught an oar or a man's limb. Before Hodge could draw his knife and cut it free the boat was being pulled down bows first under the whale's spinning body. Hodge fell clear but so quickly did the whole thing happen that only one of his five men had the presence of mind to jump and save himself from being pulled under with the boat. That man was yelling lustily for help but

Hodge, obviously hurt, was struggling feebly in the tormented waters around the whale.

'Any of you who can swim follow me,' said Thomas. 'Jamie, you can't, I know, so look after Sam.'

He reached Hodge just in time but none of the others were able to relinquish the support of the wreck to go to the help of the other man. As he towed Hodge to safety he could see the fellow now quietly holding on to a large piece of wreckage; but of the other four men there was no sign.

It was not until Hamm and Jacobs had killed their whales that they fully realised the fate of their comrades. When they saw what had happened they brought their boats alongside and rescued all survivors from the sea in which several sharks were already growing dangerously curious.

Two whales had been killed at the cost of five dead men and two stove boats. The whaleboats were replaceable but the *Meribah* would find herself short of men for the rest of the voyage unless fresh volunteers could be found among the natives of the Pacific islands.

Two days later Hodge, lying in his bunk on board the *Meribah* sent word by the cabin boy that he would like to speak to Thomas. He looked up from under his bandaged brow as the younger man entered the cabin.

'Hamm has just told me that you saved my life, Oakley,' he said gruffly, 'and I'd like to—to thank you.'

Thomas said nothing. He was looking for the first time at six miniature paintings on a shelf over Hodge's bunk.

The older man followed his gaze. 'They'll be thankful too,' he said, 'even though they only see me for a few months every four years.'

'It's a long time to be away from your family,' said Thomas.

'Makes a man a bit crusty as he gets older,' said Hodge.

'but I don't suppose a young bachelor like yourself would realise that, eh?'

'He might,' replied Thomas thoughtfully, 'if there was a lass waiting for him in New England.'

Hodge closed his eyes and Thomas standing by the bunk looked down at the face so pale now from loss of blood. He saw the rough features twitch nervously within their framework of bandages and he guessed that the man was struggling with some deep emotion.

Slowly the eyes opened again and when Hodge spoke all trace of the old harshness had gone from his voice.

'You know, Oakley, being bedridden gives a man a chance to do a bit of thinkin'. It's like—like as if a man goes into the wilderness away from all the devils that have plagued him. He's able to see himself anew; I suppose you might say to—to see himself as God might see him.' He paused and looked straight up at the younger man's face. 'I was young and keen like you once but my runnin' riggin' got fouled somehow. After I was made first mate I always hankered after a command of my own but it never came my way. I blamed everyone but myself and that's where I went adrift. I thought that being a good whaleman and navigator was enough but I was wrong. It needs more than just that to take a ship and thirty-odd souls on a four-year voyage round the world: it needs an understanding of men and that's something I never gave much thought to. Ah well, it's too late now for an old shellback like me to change his markin's. Perhaps if——'

But his soliloquy was cut short by the old time-worn cry from above.

'There she blo-o-o-o-o-ows!'

Automatically Thomas leapt for the companionway but half-way up the ladder he stopped and called back over his shoulder.

'It's never too late to try Mr. Hodge. There isn't a better whaleman than you in the whole Nantucket fleet

and I've got a feeling there's a new star shining for you this voyage if you'll only put your jibboom towards it.'

'Maybe you're right, son,' called Hodge with a note of humour in his voice, 'but it ain't no time to stand gammin' with whales spoutin'. . . .'

But Thomas was already on deck racing towards his boat.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

# *Homeward Bound*

CAPTAIN GALLOWAY had become very impatient. The return cruise along the Line had done little to increase the oil cargo. The *Meribah* had met a big English whaler which had filled her holds twenty-three months out from Hull and a German whaler seventeen months out from Bremen which had killed only eleven whales.

Having taken on fresh victuals and found three replacements for his crew among the natives in the Marquesas Islands the captain decided to let his ship try her fortune on the grounds that lay south of the Equator offshore of the Spanish Main; for it was November, the month when the season there began.

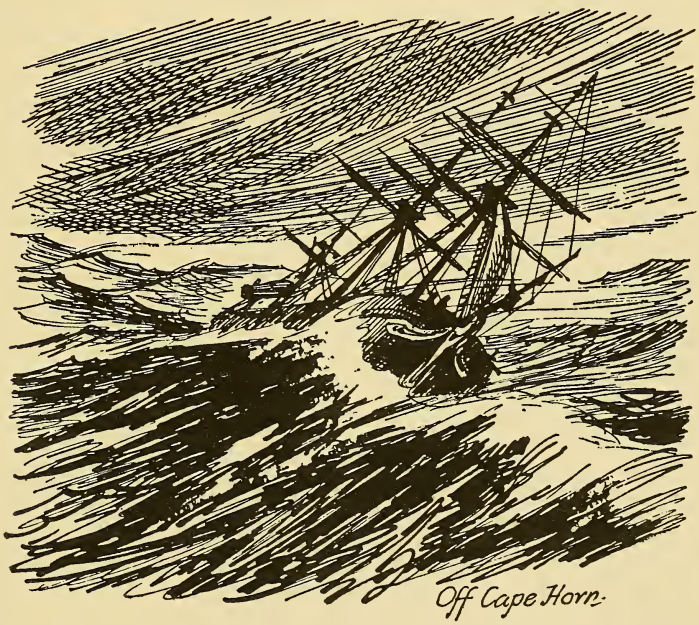
During the two months that followed there were many in the *Meribah* who believed that all the sperm whales in the Pacific had assembled within a small area of the tropics between the latitudes of 90 and 100 degrees west. Some days whales were killed at a greater rate than the blubber could be cut and tried-out and the cargo increased so rapidly that soon there was not an empty barrel in the ship. When every odd tub and bucket had been filled and sealed the men caulked their sea chests and filled those with oil.

When at last one of the men asked if he could use the coffee-pots Captain Galloway decided that it was time to set course for home.

He stood upon the poop-deck and beamed down at the men who stood expectantly by the smoke-blackened try-works. He knew full well the words they were waiting for him to speak.

'All right men, over the side with that pile of bricks,' he called.

To the accompaniment of yells of joy the now superfluous burden of the try-works was thrown brick by brick




into the sea until only the coppers and the shallow cooling tray remained.

'You can keep those to float your toy boats in,' called the captain for he had seen some of the men making ship models during the earlier weeks of inactivity. 'And now, Mr. Hodge,' addressing the first mate who had long recovered from his injuries, 'set course for Talcahuano on

the Chile coast. We'll recruit fresh victuals there and head for Cape Horn and home.'

Off Cape Horn the relentless west winds blew with their utmost fury and twelve barrels of the precious oil were emptied on to the mountainous seas to help the battered ship to safety. She limped into the Falkland Islands for repairs and then spreading her patched sails set her jibboom northward. As the latitudes grew lower spirits rose high, for this was the Atlantic whose waters lapped the Nantucket shores.

* * *

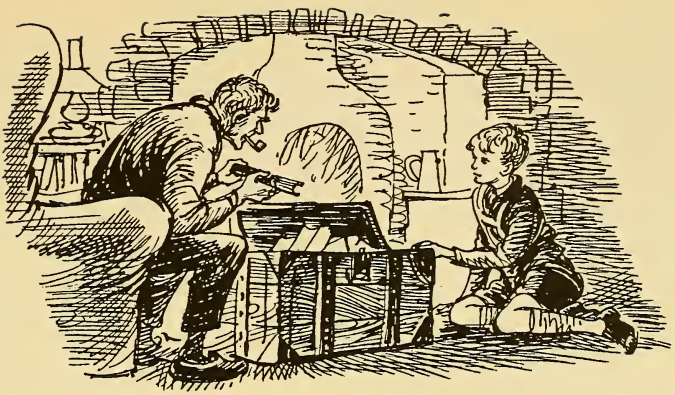
In the pale sunlight of an April morning Thomas was helping to warp the *Meribah* alongside the wharf at Nantucket when he caught sight of his father and mother arm in arm with a girl of twenty among the cheering, waving crowd on the shore. As soon as the ship was made fast he leapt on to the wharf, embraced his mother and shook his father warmly by the hand. The girl stood shyly apart with eyes lowered until Thomas taking her by the hands kissed her softly on the cheek.

Captain Galloway leant over the taffrail and waved to Thomas's father.

'We did it again, Henry,' he shouted with a broad grin on his weather-beaten face. 'We filled her holds to the hatches inside the four years. But it's the last time for me. I'm getting too old. You can let Mr. Hodge take her next voyage.'

That evening in a room of the Oakley house overlooking the harbour the diaries of Jonathan and Thomas rested in an honoured place next to the family Bible for all future generations of Oakleys to read.

# *Part Three: Peter, Carl and Hans*



CHAPTER TWENTY

# *The Old Oaken Chest*

IN THE WESTFOLD district of Norway there lives to-day a community which is a modern counterpart of that which once flourished in Nantucket. It owes its prosperity to its specialised knowledge of whale hunting and yet, like the people of old Nantucket its roots are in its homeland farms.

In one of the farmhouses of this district on a wintry February evening in the year 1954 a broad weatherbeaten man in his middle fifties was replacing some old documents and books in an oak chest. His name was Olafsen; Peter Oakley Olafsen, and this was the first winter since boyhood that he had not sailed south with the whaling fleets. Gout had finally forced him to bid farewell to the rigours of the Antarctic whaling and to admit that it was a life for younger men like his son Carl.

The twelve-year-old boy sprawling at Peter's feet before

the roaring log fire was Carl's son and his blue eyes watched intently as the rough hands of the farmer whaleman replaced the contents of the chest.

'Are they *very* old, Grandpa, those books?' he asked.

'Yes, Hans, they are indeed,' replied Peter, his grizzled features lighting with pleasure at the boy's interest. 'They are the diaries written by our whalemen ancestors on my grandmother's side; she came from Scotland but was American by birth. A lad named Jonathan Oakley wrote the first of these when he was the same age as you and the other set was written by Thomas Oakley who was my great-grandfather.'

'Yes, I've heard father talk of them and know a good deal about them, already,' said Hans. 'And all those papers and letters, some of those are in English too, aren't they?' he asked.

'Yes,' replied his grandfather, but all the recent ones are in our own Norwegian.'

'How did the English diaries come to be in this farm in the Westfold?' the boy asked, looked very serious.

'That, Hans, was something that I wanted to discover for certain when I started delving into this old chest a few weeks ago. It makes quite a tale. Let me put another log on the fire and I'll tell you about it—if you're interested, that is.'

'Of course I am, Grandpa,' said the boy eagerly as he watched Peter put the log on the fire and then sit back and light his stubby pipe.

'Thomas Oakley,' began Peter, 'started his diary as a young man when his mother presented him with the one written by Jonathan. His home, as you may know, was in Nantucket in America and his fortunes first thrived and then dwindled as the sperm whaling industry of that once prosperous little island fell into decline. From about 1850 kerosene began to replace sperm oil as a means of lighting streets and houses and by 1870 the ships that

Thomas owned lay rotting at their moorings. Nantucket had weathered many storms but this time Thomas knew that its days of prosperity were ended. But sperm whaling was the only business that Thomas and his only son Edward knew, so they refitted one of their whaleships and sold up the rest together with the house and shipyard that Jonathan had founded, then with Mrs. Oakley and the three daughters they sailed to Britain where the sperm whale industry was still thriving. They settled in Dundee where sperm oil was wanted for the jute industry and once more Thomas and his son sailed to the Pacific after the cachalots. These were not so easy to find after being hunted so intensely for a century but the Oakleys brought back enough oil to show good profits.

'Then Jane, Thomas's second daughter, met a man from our own country. His name was Erik Olafsen and he was mate of a Norwegian whaler visiting Dundee. Jane married him and sailed with him across the North Sea to his home in Norway. Here great new changes were taking place in the old industry of whaling.

'The firing of a harpoon from a gun which so many men had attempted through the centuries had at last been perfected in 1872 by a man named Svend Foyn; and what is more, the barbed harpoon head had been fitted with a charge that exploded on entering the whale and so killed it more quickly. Foyn had mounted his guns in the bows of schooners propelled by the new-fangled steam engine and had made it possible at last to kill the bigger species of the rorquals, the blue and the fin whales, which had always been too fast a target for the hand harpoon thrown from a rowing boat. It was their speed which had saved them from being killed off like the right whales.

'The rorquals, which you can tell by the fluting on their throats and the fin on their backs, are members of the baleen family but are more streamlined than the right whales; and the blue and fin whales are the largest of all

living creatures. I have killed cow blue whales over a hundred feet long, though sad to say, not so many in recent years. They feed on the small creatures we call "krill" and you can make your own guess as to how many pints of these shrimps it must take to build up a body weighing a hundred and twenty tons. Why, even their babies are twenty-four feet long at birth. The rorqual's baleen is shorter than the right whale's, but that did not matter to Foyn. He knew that it was their oil that the world needed, for such things as soaps and the treating of textiles.

'My grandfather, Erik Olafsen, sailed in Foyn's steam whalers from the land station at Varangerfiord on the Finmark coast. They used to bring the whales to the shore for flensing just as they used to do in Jonathan's days—only then it was called "cutting in". They did so well up there in the Arctic that other countries tried to copy them and Foyn was forced to protect the industry he had created by obtaining from the King the right to exclude all other nations for a period of ten years. At the end of that time the other countries sent their whale catchers swarming into the Arctic with the new lethal harpoon guns. When they were too far from land stations they brought their whales to a mother ship equipped with boiling vats. In a few seasons the rorquals in the Arctic were practically exterminated and it was the sad story of the Greenland whale all over again.

'So Foyn made up his mind to find new grounds and in 1893 sent a ship to the Antarctic on the other side of the globe. She returned with reports that the sea there was teeming with whales. Shortly afterwards Foyn died in the happy knowledge that the future of the industry was still assured.

'By now the four sons of Grandpa and Grandma Olafsen had grown up and followed their father into the whaling industry. They sailed from the harbours of

Sandefiord and Tonsberg on the west side of the great Oslo Fiord. Those boys made plenty of money at whaling but old Grandma Olafsen made sure they didn't waste it. She still remembered the sad days of the Nantucket whalers rotting at their moorings and whalemen sitting idle on the wharves. So she got them to invest their money in farmland here in the Westfold. To these, she said, they and their sons after them could return when they grew too old to hunt the whale; and if fortune ceased to favour them on the sea they could work on the land instead.

'Every few years Grandma stole time from her busy life of farming and looking after my father and his brothers to visit her side of the family in Dundee across the water. It was on one of these occasions that her brother Edward suggested that the proper place for all the old whaling relics and heirlooms was in her home in Norway. He had retired from whaling and had no sons to carry on the tradition. So she brought them back with her to the farm in this oak chest and it lay in the attic, unopened as far as I know, until one day after I had retired I took it into my head to see what was inside. And that's how it came about, Hans, that I found the diaries and all these old documents and letters.'

Hans was lying on his back looking up at the ceiling. 'And I suppose some of these letters were written by you and your father, Grandpa?'

'Yes, Hans, and *they* could tell the rest of the story.'

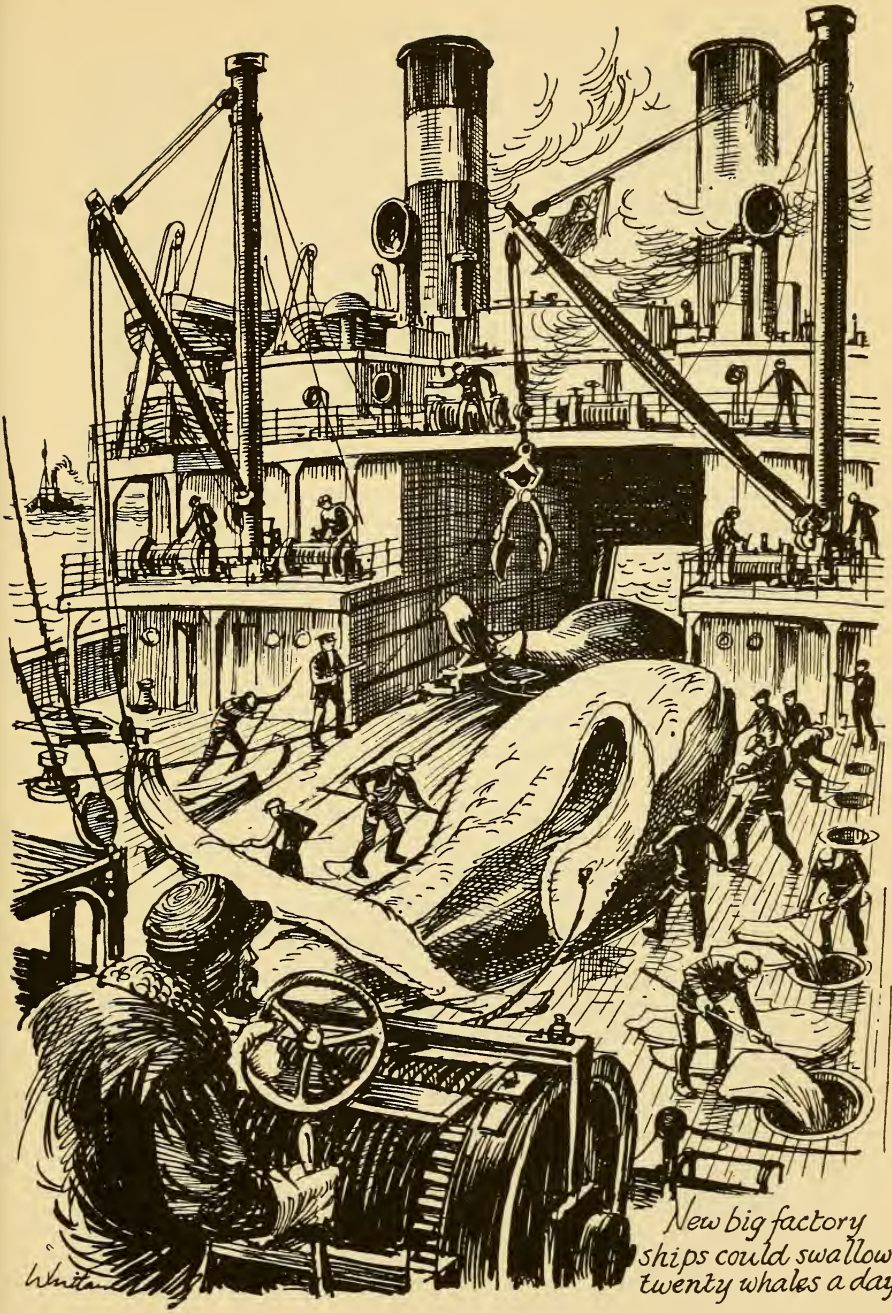
'Let me hear it then, please, Grandpa,' said Hans rolling over on his tummy.

'It's late and near your bedtime, boy, but as my ship-load of thoughts is still bowling along with a bone in her teeth, as you might say, I might as well give her her head.

'In 1904 my father, Roald Olafsen, went with Larsen as a gunner on the expedition that opened the first land whaling station in the Antarctic. The British granted

them concessions to operate from South Georgia, one of the Falkland Island Dependencies. Every season the Norwegians sent more and more catchers down there. At first they brought their whales to the shore for flensing and the blubber was boiled in the factory on the shore in the old-fashioned way. But as the area became scarce of whales and they had to go further afield they began to use ships of about ten thousand tons which carried the factory on board. The factory ships usually had to find a quiet anchorage in some bay on the Antarctic coast because the open water was too rough for them to receive whales and flense them alongside. Then small catchers were still not fast or manœuvrable enough to keep up with the fast swimming rorquals. So they lay in wait in a likely area and harpooned them as they broke surface and after a bit of a battle got them alongside and took them to the factory ship. They did not kill a lot by modern standards and the factory ships wasted a great deal because of their limited plant. By now the world wanted whale oil for the newly invented margarine as well as for other things like soap and explosives. A better kind of factory ship was wanted to cope with the demand. Then someone suggested that if a ship could cut her whales on her decks instead of alongside she would not have to sit in the quiet bays but would be able to work anywhere no matter how rough the sea. So the shipbuilders went to work and we moved on to the modern age of whaling—deep-sea or pelagic whaling as it is sometimes called.

'It so happened that I went south in a catcher in 1924 with the first factory ship to have a whale slip built into its stern. You can imagine the excitement when the first whale was hauled on deck. Then there was the improved factory plant and to match all this we had bigger and faster catchers that were quicker on the helm. For the first time we found that we could keep on to the tail of a blue or a fin whale.



*New big factory ships could swallow twenty whales a day*

'The world was hungry for oil and we were the ones to get it. Britain, Holland, Germany, South Africa and Japan sent their ships to reap the harvests of oil from the Antarctic waters and in every case, if the ships were not actually manned by men of Sandefiord and Tonsberg then the crews had been trained by them.

'New big factory ships could swallow twenty whales a day through the tunnels in their sterns. Their improved factories could boil oil not only from the blubber but from the flesh, the bones and the insides; and to-day they can take the oil from the liver to help sickly children grow strong; they can turn the meat into concentrated extract for invalids, they can dehydrate the flesh into meal for feeding livestock; and they can produce valuable by-products such as insulin, hormones and fertilisers. Strangely enough the one part of the whale which is discarded is the baleen which before the invention of plastic substitutes could fetch as much as £2,000 per ton.

'Yes, Hans, the whales in the Antarctic have played their part in helping a troubled hungry world through the difficulties of this twentieth century.'

But Hans looked puzzled. 'But, Grandpa,' he asked, 'isn't there a danger that the whales down south will be almost exterminated like the ones up north were?'

A new look of caution came into Peter's blue deep-set eyes. Han's question had hit him quite unexpectedly in the most vulnerable corner of his conscience and he needed a few puffs of his pipe to recover his mental equilibrum.

'That's quite a question, Hans. It was something that we harpooners never gave much thought to until others with more foresight brought us to our senses. Luckily our government saw the danger and in 1929 they stopped us killing whales with young, and then they forbade the old out-dated wasteful factory ships to operate. Then they got together with the British and put a little more common sense into our heads. The

hunting period was limited and each expedition was allowed to take only a certain quota of whales. They gave us another difficult pill to swallow just before World War II when they told us we were not to kill whales below certain lengths. Somehow I think they overlooked the humpback whale so we gunners made use of him to bring up the average of our kills and boost our precious reputations—so much so, that after the war they made him absolutely taboo south of the fortieth latitude. They have lifted the taboo recently but they still keep a very watchful eye on the welfare of Mr. Humpback. After the war all the nations with whaling ships engaged in the Antarctic fishery formed an international commission for the regulation of whaling and in 1946 they issued a long list of restrictions that made many a poor gunner dizzy to read. South of the fortieth latitude the season for baleen whales was reduced to a period of just over three months between January 2nd and April 7th. It was forbidden to kill a blue whale under seventy feet, a fin under sixty feet, a sei (one of the smaller rorquals) under forty feet, a humpback under thirty-five feet and a sperm under thirty-eight feet. I had to learn to judge the whale's length by the breadth of the part he showed above the water and that wasn't so easy when there was a gale on and the catcher's bows doing a jig. The total catch of baleen whales for all expeditions in the Southern Ocean was fixed at sixteen thousand blue whale units for each season. One blue whale equalled two fin or six sei and each factory ship had to make weekly radio reports of the numbers caught. If the sixteen thousand units was reached before April 7th then the Commission headquarters declared the season ended and we had to console ourselves with killing some sperm whale before we came home. All the whales had to be flensed within thirty-three hours of being killed to ensure good quality oil. And to make sure that all these rules were observed the Commission put a pair of

inspectors on each factory ship. It was woe betide any gunner who left his number on a whale below the minimum length or one that he had killed before he realised that it was with young.

'I can tell you, Hans, I did some swearing at first, but I realise now that if it had not been for all these restrictions there would not be many whales left in the Antarctic for your father.'

Hans looked up at his grandfather. 'Nor for me either, when I go whaling,' he said. 'Father will be home again in a few months. I wonder what sort of season he will have had.'

Carl Olafsen had signed as a harpooner to a British expedition and had sailed from Tonsberg last October as the brown autumn leaves were falling.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

# *Steel Ships and Helicopters*

CARL WAS THIRTY-FIVE, fair-haired and blue-eyed like the rest of his family and the chill Antarctic air had still not reached the bones of his broad frame after seventeen seasons whaling. His whale catcher was waiting for him in South Georgia where with others she had been refitted during the southern winter. The gunner already appointed to her had gone sick and to join her it was necessary to take passage either in the British factory ship or in the tanker assigned to the expedition. Carl went in the *Wanderer*, the massive twenty-five-thousand-ton floating factory.

She carried a hundred men for the catchers and towing boats as well as the four hundred who navigated her,

worked her engines and her factory and flensed her whales. She carried scientists, meteorologists, men from a film company and a young English doctor not long out of medical college. Her captain and lord over all the fleet of catchers was a burly Norwegian of forty; her chief engineer was a small wiry Scot from Glasgow and the tall mate in charge of the whaling deck could remember the days when the Scottish whalers sailed from his native Dundee; the factory manager was from Tonsberg and almost the whole of the rank and file came from the Westfold district of Norway.

From the distance the ship herself can be distinguished as a whaler chiefly by the twin funnels abreast her after deckhouse and the huge square port in her stern; but on board it is the uninterrupted expanse of her main deck that is most noticeable. You can stand under the bridge and look aft through the archway in the midships deckhouse as far as the whale slip which slopes down to the sea under the after deckhouse. This broad deck where the whales are flensed and cut is the dividing level between the upper and lower storeys of this floating industrial town. Above are the quarters of the men who work the ship, the wheelhouse which contains every modern navigational device, the numerous winches and the derricks which haul the whales, the mechanical saws which cut up the bones and the lifeboats which everyone hopes will never be used in earnest. Below are the great oil-burning engines that drive the ship and supply the power for her plant, the tanks that can be used for storing either fuel or whale oil, the deep holds that contain the sacks of whalemeal and last of all the factory plant itself which stretches nearly the whole length and breadth of the ship on the deck below the whaling deck. The factory is fed with its raw material, blubber, flesh and bones through the rows of circular holes that can be opened in the whaling deck by removing the iron discs that cover them.

The *Wanderer* put into Leith in Scotland to complete her final preparations at the whaling company's headquarters and then with all the paraphernalia of modern whaling heaped upon her spacious deck she steamed south to take on fuel oil at Fawley in the Southampton Water.

Down channel she groped her way through a dense November fog and in mountainous seas in the Bay of Biscay was joined by two of the catchers which had been undergoing repairs in South Shields.

There was no mistaking those fast cheeky little four-hundred-ton ships with their catwalks reaching from bridge to gun platform and their narrow hulls low in the middle and rising steeply to the bows. Carl knew only too well how uncomfortable life must be on board those catchers at that moment as he watched them plunging into waves that sometimes seemed to wash right over them.

During the passage the whole area of the *Wanderer's* broad whaling deck and every other deck and alleyway where the spiked boots of the whalemen would tread during the fishing season were covered with a protective layer of planking to avoid damaging the permanent wooden decks.

The big ship with two of her children at her heel sailed over the blue sea of the tropics and through the Roaring Forties till she found the rest of her brood waiting for her off the island of New Georgia. There was a big tanker with them, ready to refill the *Wanderer's* fuel tanks.

Catcher No. 9 waited her turn and then came alongside. Carl with all his belongings climbed into a huge basket which was swung by a derrick off the *Wanderer's* deck and down to the catcher lying under her tall iron sides. Between the two a large newly killed sperm whale acted as a fender. On the catcher's bridge Carl was greeted warmly by the bearded mate who handed over command. Then when the catcher had taken the rest of her crew, her harpoons, ammunition, food and other stores Carl

gave the order to cast off from the mother ship. The engine telegraphs rang, the screw churned the blue water to white foam and Carl's eighteenth season began.

During the rest of November and the whole of December the expedition could kill only sperm whale for which the season was open eight months of the year. You never know what price sperm oil is going to fetch to-day for its uses are quite different from those of oil from baleen

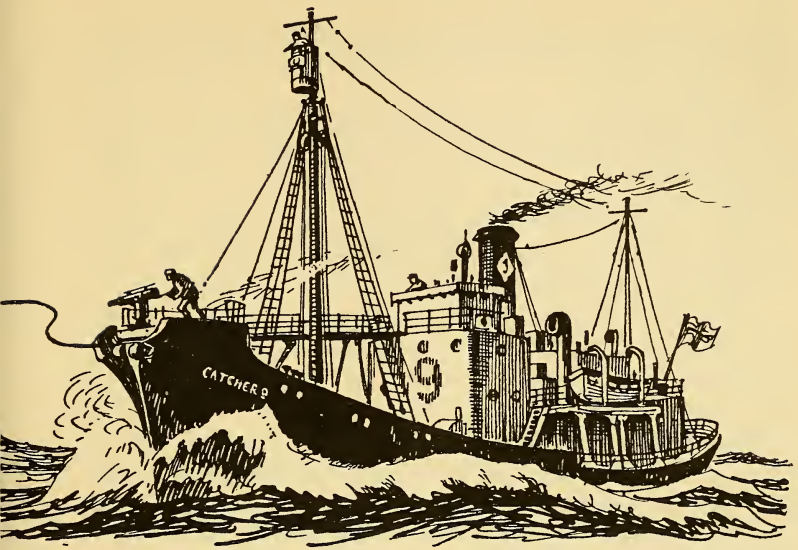
whales, but the British Ministry of Food will always pay a fair price for the meal that can be dehydrated from the flesh.

It was in search of the more valuable baleen whales that this £3 million worth of shipping had come from the other side of the globe on a £1 million expedition.

On Christmas Day Carl's catcher sheltered from a howling gale under the lee of a big iceberg and her company did their best to celebrate while the little ship rolled her scuppers under.

As the baleen season approached the tanker arrived from South Africa and moored to the *Wanderer*. In return for fuel oil she took the factory ship's cargo of sperm oil. Then she headed north bound for Liverpool and the nine catchers and the two towing boats nestled up to the mother ship while she gave them fuel oil, food stores and long awaited letters from home.

The factory's empty tanks, vats and plumbing were




cleaned of the last remnants of sperm oil with boiling salt water, for the oil of the big toothed whale is quite different chemically from that of the baleen whales.

The radio chattered with cross-talk in Norwegian, Dutch, German and English as the *Wanderer's* operators tuned into the wave lengths of rival expeditions. Everyone was closing into the edge of the ice that sits like a white cap on the south polar regions.

Then at 24.00 hours on January 1st the catchers were released like a pack of hungry hounds and the hunt for baleen whales was on. It was now every catcher and every expedition for itself and the devil take the hindmost.

With the catcher throbbing along at fifteen knots Carl stood on the bridge peering through the half-light of the early dawn that follows the brief Antarctic night. Aloft in the crows-nest the lookout circled his big binoculars around the flat mirror of the sea on which the ice floes lay scattered like pieces of broken white china. On some of

them seals with large pathetic eyes seemed completely to ignore the grey catcher ploughing the smooth green sea into white foam.

'There she blo-o-o-ows!' The cry from aloft sent every man running to his station. 'Two points on the port beam!'

Carl took the wheel and put the catcher's bow on the bearing. Then through the wheelhouse window he saw a single whale spouting a mile ahead.

'Take over, Berndt,' he said to the mate and ran along the catwalk that bridged the space between the wheelhouse and the gun platform. Below him as he ran men were manning the whaleline winches on the foredeck.

The gun was always kept loaded when hunting was in progress and the head of the harpoon projected from the nozzle. Hanging from it and coiled down on the fore part of the platform was the sixty fathom of light nylon rope that connected the harpoon with its thick manilla whale line hidden below.

Carl gripped the slender butt of the gun in one hand and kept the other free for signalling orders to the mate in the wheelhouse behind him.

The whale which he could now see was a big blue, rolled its back, showed its fin and sounded a few hundred yards ahead.

'Stop engine!' The catcher glided to the spot where the whirlpools still showed.

Everything was suddenly very still. Everyone waited tense and ready; Carl at the gun, Berndt at the wheel and the engineers below with their eyes on the telegraphs. Five minutes, ten, then——

'There she is blowing to port! Full ahead! Hard over!

Again the fifteen-knot chase was on but again the whale sounded before Carl could get near enough to shoot.

Four more times the catcher drove the whale under,

giving her no time to refresh her lungs. Then she broke surface to starboard well within the hundred yards range of the gun.

Carl swung the gun, sighted and pressed the trigger. The ship shook with the explosion and the harpoon flashed through the air with the nylon forerunner snaking after it and as it hit the blue-grey shape there was a second duller explosion. The whale sounded and the manilla whale line went whistling out through the fairlead in the bows.

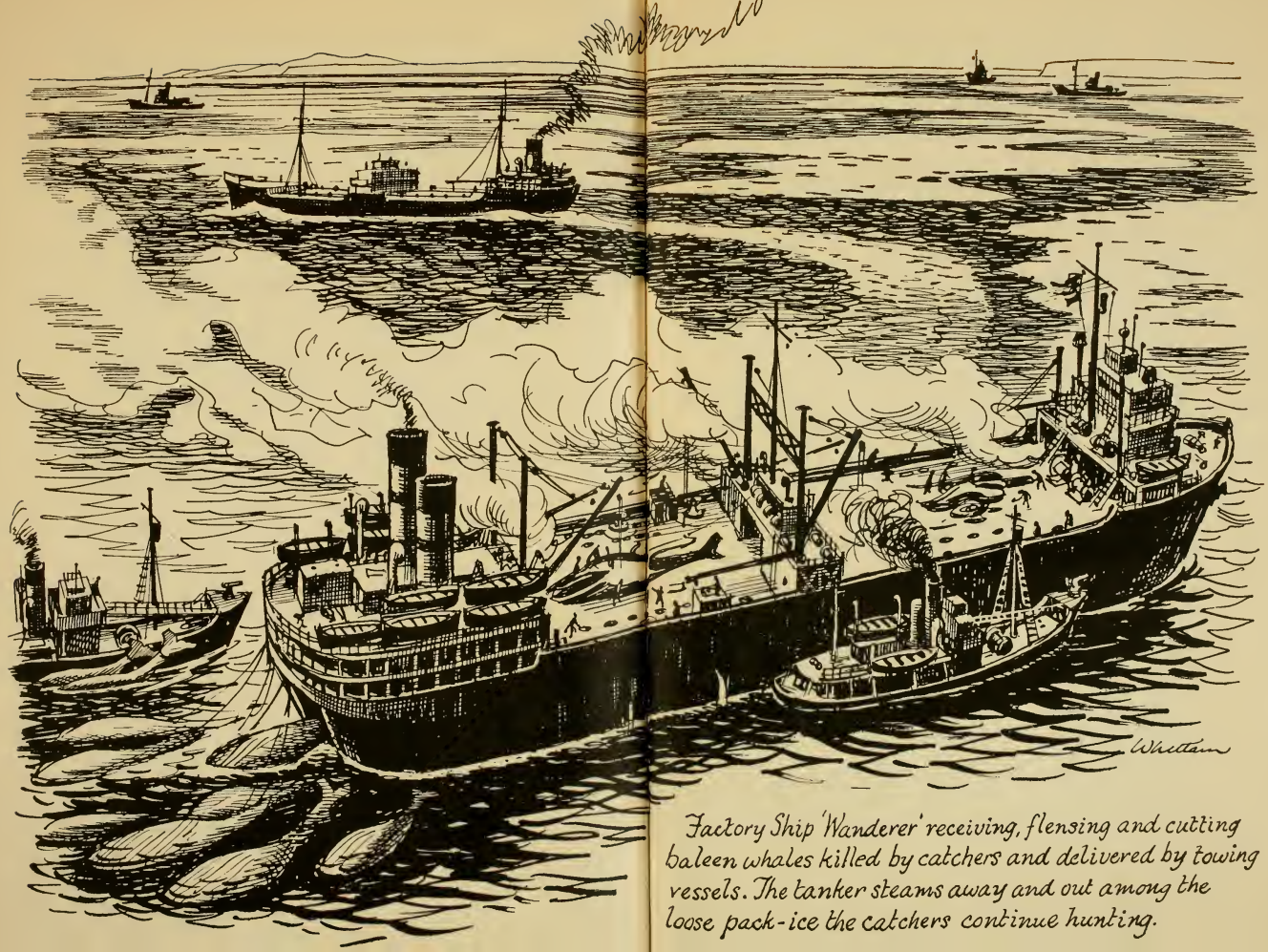
'Fish on!' The cry echoed through the ship. Whalemen still call the whale a fish though all the world now knows that it is a mammal.

But this is coarse fishing compared with the light rod and fly methods in the days when the wooden whaleboat with a thin manilla line running round a loggerhead played a monster a hundred times her own weight. Now it is a four-hundred-ton ship with a 2000 h.p. engine, a manilla line three times as thick, winches to haul and veer and big steel springs to take the shock from a whale that is usually mortally wounded from the start anyway. But let no one say that it is not still the most thrilling of big game hunting.

Very carefully so that the harpoon should not be pulled out the whale was hauled to the ship. It lashed once with its tail and then dying, rolled on its side to reveal the white corrugated skin of its throat.

When it was hauled to ship a hole was made in its side, a valve inserted and air pumped in to prevent it from sinking. The hole was stoppered, the tail flukes were trimmed and a wire sling fitted round the small of the tail. The number of the catcher and the whale were carved on its side and a bamboo with a flag on it erected on the summit—and all at great speed for there was a school of fin whales spouting to the southward.

Away went Catcher No. 9 with Carl standing ready at



*Factory Ship 'Wanderer' receiving, flensing and cutting baleen whales killed by catchers and delivered by towing vessels. The tanker steams away and out among the loose pack-ice the catchers continue hunting.*

his gun on the high bows. A wind was rising and the salt spray was caking on his beard.

While the catchers continued hunting whales the two towing boats, converted ex-naval corvettes, plodded round collecting the inflated carcasses. With two or three lashed by heavy chains on either side they took them to the factory ship where they were moored to her stern to await their turn to go up the slip. Killer whales cruised among them waiting for a chance to bite out the tongues.

Carl's big blue was whale No. 1. A hawser was shackled to the sling on its tail. One of the fishing winches above the slipway spat steam as its drum began to rotate. The hawser went taut and the whale parted company from the others and entered the square tunnel tail first. It surged in the waves that washed the slipway and would have snapped the thick wire but for the big steel springs hidden under the deck plates near the fishing winch. Another winch rattled and massive iron claws descended from the roof of the tunnel to clasp the tail of the whale. Now the midships winches took over and whale No. 1 continued its way up the incline and reached that half of the main whaling deck known as the blubber plane.

Here the Commission's inspector, a retired naval commander, armed with notebook and tape measure, made sure that it was not in milk. He could see at a glance that this big blue was well above the minimum length.

The tail claws were lifted clear and sent aft for the next whale while the razor-sharp knives of the flensers were already making deep cuts from head to tail. Soon the longitudinal strips were being torn from the whale by the smaller winches. In a short while the white carcass, looking like a huge peeled banana, was hauled under the archway in the midships deckhouse by yet another set of winches mounted on the forward part of the ship. The

whale as such had reached the end of its journey. This was the meat plane and no place for the squeamish. Flesh, intestines, heart, liver, everything was separated. The dark figures of the high-booted men moved like an army of ants among the huge, dripping, shapeless masses of red and white. Mechanical saws hummed as they cut through the bones. Winches rattled and white vapour floated like smoke over the scene of a bloody battle.

The littered pieces that less than an hour ago had been whale No. 1 were gradually swallowed through the factory's gaping mouths that lay in rows along the deck. Whale No. 2 was a white ghost of its former self and No. 3 was on its way up the slip. Twenty whales a day and every one worth an average of £1,500.

* * *

Yes, like all great industries whaling has been mechanised. No longer is the whale the enemy as it was in the times of Jonathan and Thomas. It is only the weather that the modern whaleman has to fight; especially in the catchers.

Carl would sight whales in a flat calm and an hour later would be chasing them in a roaring gale. He would run his ship to the shelter of a berg and curse the wasted days that the catcher lay there waiting for the wind to stop screaming. Sometimes fog would lay a veil over the sea and make it impossible to sight whale, or ice would cover the catcher with a coat of white that jammed the whaling gear. No wonder that men like Carl had to be tough and materialistic.

Yet in Carl there was also the rare quality of imagination just as there had been in old Svend Foyn. Perhaps it was the blood of Jonathan in his veins.

One day far out of sight of the *Wanderer* he pointed his catcher's bows towards a spot where seabirds were wheeling over the water. It was a sign that often revealed the

presence of whale. To his surprise a helicopter appeared from out of the blue sky and dropped a smoke marker amongst the screaming birds. Hull down over the horizon he saw through his binoculars the three 'islands' of a strange factory ship and on the stern island a big structure which was obviously an aeroplane hangar. Bustling across the water with a white bone in her teeth was a rival catcher. She was making for the smoke marker, guided no doubt by radio-telephone directions from the helicopter.

A school of fin whales broke surface near the marker and for the next hour Carl was too busy trying to outwit both whales and the rival catcher to think of much else. But when with justifiable pride he had stuck his flags on two dead whales to the stranger's one and was leaning on the windbreak of the bridge enjoying a pipe he found that the incident had made a deep impression on his mind.

That helicopter had only been *spotting* whales. Was there any reason why some time in the future it should not be able to *kill* them as well?

The traditional whaleman in Carl fought in vain to banish this idea which, nourished by earlier rumours heard in the *Wanderer*, persisted in his imagination. During the war he had seen planes firing rockets at submarines. Why could not a helicopter do the same to whales but with all the added advantage of being able to hover at point blank range? The whale could be killed quickly. No need for a harpoon line to stop it from going down. Carbon dioxide released by the explosion could inflate the whale and prevent it from sinking. It *might* be used, not for the purpose of killing more whales—the Commission would see to that—but to cut the costs of an expedition if the price of whale oil dropped. A half-dozen helicopters housed in hangars on a factory ship would probably be much cheaper to man, equip and operate than a dozen catchers and yet be able

to kill just as many whales, despite the limitations of the weather.

Carl turned to the burly mate. 'Berndt,' he said, 'those helicopters—suppose the companies ever decided to use them instead of catchers?'

Berndt grunted. 'Don't worry, Carl, they never will. They tried electrocuting whales once—said it was more humane or something—but it never came to much, did it?'

'No, the gunners didn't like it. But you've got to face facts, Berndt. We lose a lot of whales through broken harpoon lines and the one catcher they tried it on lost almost none.'

'If it was such a good idea then why didn't it take on?' grunted the mate.

'Because, Berndt, our folk do not like changes,' replied Carl.

'But people are always trying new things. Look at the scheme the British tried in Africa—getting margarine from ground nuts so as to give the whales a rest. Some said that that would threaten our livelihood but it didn't, because it failed.'

'It was a brave effort though, Berndt. The British know that the whales in the Antarctic must be given a rest sometime and that the world must discover other ways of producing edible fats. We gunners all go for the biggest whales; that is only natural, but if you look at the statistics you'll see that it causes the average lengths to fall every year. It is that and not so much the actual numbers that the governments worry over because they know that the whales cannot reproduce themselves below certain lengths. Make no mistake, Berndt. If the world of commerce can find better ways of getting oil it will use them and think afterwards about the whalemen of the Westfold.'

'Huh!' grunted Berndt. 'You've been reading too many Whaling Gazettes, Carl.'

Carl turned away and his blue eyes were on the far horizon. Changes will come, he thought, and unless we move with the times the profession that we grasp so tightly and jealously may slip like quicksilver through our fingers. After all, it happened to the Basques, the English, the Dutch and the New Englanders in earlier days.

He watched a lone albatross gliding on motionless wings. Who knows, he concluded, my son Hans may have to learn to fly if he is to be a whale hunter like his father.

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